

NOVEMBER
COSMOPOLITAN
TEN CENTS





THE OCCULTATION OF FLORIAN AMIDON

By HERBERT QUICK

I

A CLASP AND A FORGETTING

Deep in the Wall where blanketing hides the slanting and Naked Truth.

I knew direct, and dared to select emanated this Fragment of tested Truth.

And one of the parting those of mine passed with a warning Eye.

Over the Gate as I stretched it forth and he would me to drop that lie

But all ye who know the Omphalos, and who seek for the Ultimate Fact

Who know the Truth and its spite of Truth have placed the Beacon

Come lit in the Lay that I sing to-day and choose between him and me

And choosing show that ye always knew the lie from the Verdict!

—The Name of the Hidden Sphere

BAGGS," said Mr. Amidon, "take things entirely into your own hands. I'm off."

"All right," said Baggs. "It's only a day's run to Canada; but in case I should prove honest, and need to hear from you, you'll leave your address?"

Mr. Amidon frowned and made a gesture expressive of uncertainty.

"No," said he, in a high-pitched and questioning tone. "Nad I want to see if this business owns me, or if I own it. Why will you need to communicate with me? Whenever I'm off a day you always sign everything, and I will not be away but a day or two this time! I shall not leave any address, and don't look for me until I step in as that dear! Good-by."

And he walked out of the bank, went home, and began looking over for the last time his cameras, films, tripods and the other paraphernalia of his trade.

"The habit of running off alone, Florian," said Mrs. Baggs, his sister, housekeeper, general manager, and the wife of Baggs, his confidential clerk and oldest partner, "gives me an uneasy feeling. If you had only done as I wanted you to do, you'd have had some one——"

"Now, Jennie," said he, "we have settled that question a dozen times, and we can't go over it again if I am to catch the 4:48 train. Keep your eyes on the men, and keep Bagg up in the collar, and see that William and Ranger get their just dues. I must have rest, Jennie, and as for the wife, why, there'll be more some day for this purely speculative family of yours if we—— By the way, there's the whistle at Anderson's crossing. Good-by, my dear!"

On the 4:48 train, at least until it had aged into the 7:00 or 8:00, Mr. Florian Amidon, banker, and most attractive unmarried man of Hensburt, was not permitted to forget that his going away was an important event. What followed was so extraordinary that everything he said or did was remembered, and the record is tolerably complete. He talked with Simon Woodover, one of his tenants, about the delinquent rent, and gave Simon a note to Bagg relative to taking some stiers in settlement. This was before 4:17, at which time Mr. Woodover got off at Duxbury.

"He was entirely normal," said Simon during the course of his examination—"more normal than I ever saw him, as I figured the drink on those stiers most correct from his staidy'nt, on a business card with a hotelish pencil. He took me out of about eight dollars as a half. He was exceedingly normal—up to 4:17."

Mr. Amidon also encountered Mrs. Hunter and Miss Hunter in the parlor, immediately after leaving Duxbury. Miss Hunter was on her way to the Maine seacoast-tickets with the Senator

Forster, to whom Mrs. Hunter was taking her. Mrs. Hunter noticed nothing peculiar in his behavior, except the poised manner in which he passed the chair by Missie's side, and took the one by her mother. This seemed abnormal to Mrs. Hunter, whose egoisms had its accent in her daughter, but those who remembered the respectful terror with which he regarded women between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, failed to see exceptional conduct in this. His lawyer, Judge Blodgett, with whom he went into the buffet at about seven, found him in conversation with these two ladies.

"He seemed embarrassed," said the judge, "and was blushing. Mrs. Hunter was explaining the new style in ladies' figures, and asking him if he didn't think Missie was getting much plumper. As soon as he saw me he pulled 'Hello, Blodgett! Come into the buffet! I want to see you about some legal matters.' He excused himself to the ladies, and we went into the buffet."

"What legal matters did he place before you?" said his interlocutor.

"Two bottles of beer," said the judge, "and a box of cigars. Then he talked Browning to me until 8:00, when he got off at Elm Springs Junction, to take the Limited north. He was wrong on Browning, but otherwise all right."

It was, therefore, at 8:00, or 8:05 (for the engineer's report showed the train two minutes late out of Elm Springs Junction), that Florian Amidon became the sole occupant of this remote country railway platform. He sat on a trunkful of photographer's supplies, with a



Mr. Quirk was mayor of his city and although not now holding political office, is a member of the Iowa Democratic State Committee.

Mr. Robert Quirk author of "The Cooultation of Florian Amidon" has already published two novels, in which he shows himself possessed of a strong predilection for the narratives on which has been stimulated by the wonderful developments of the Middle West, in the heart of which he was born and has always lived. He resembles until his look appearance to a novel of years ago. The world knew him as a thoroughly practical man. Here he lives forty-four years ago. He is present of the late than by look and bearing to a farmer. His appearance required through teaching and editorial work enabled him to study law. The practice of which caused him to take up his residence in 1880 in Sioux City where he now resides. Mr. Quirk has failed to be present of his literary attainments, but he would rather be known by the pen of his connection, as attorney with a vigorous connection in Sioux City which accomplished on a small scale work similar to that of Mr. Felix in Kansas. For two years

suit-case and a leather bag at his back. It was the evening of June 27, 1888. All about the lonely station the trees swayed down to the right of way, and rustled in a gentle evening breeze. Somewhere off in the wood, his ear discerned the faint hoot of an owl. Across the creek in a pool under the shadow of the semaphore, he heard the full croak-ten of the frogs, and saw reflected in the water the last exquisite glories of expiring day harped by one bright star. Laying back, he partly closed his eyelids, and wondered why so many tears came from the star—with the vague wonder of dreaminess, which comes because it has been in the habit of coming from one's earliest childhood. The star divided into two, and all its beams swung about while his gaze remained fixed, and nothing seemed quite in the focus of his vision.

Putting out his hand, presently, he touched a window damp with vapor and very cold. On the other side he felt a coarse curtain, and where the semaphore stood appeared a perpendicular bar of dim light. A vibratory sound somewhere near made him think that the owls and frogs had begun snoring. He heard horrible blinnings and the distant clanger of a bell; and then all the platform heaved and quaked under him as if it were being dragged off into the woods. He sprang upward, received a blow upon his head, rolled off to the floor, and—

Stood in the middle of the sleeping-car, clad only in a night-shirt; and a scholarly-looking negro porter looked down in his shoes, laying gentle hands upon him, and addressing him in soothing tones:

"Hink y'e hold, Mr. Brownfeld? Kind o' dreamin', wasn't y'e, eh?" said the porter. "Betten takin' in again, eh. I'll wake y'e fo' N'York. Yo' kin sleep late on account of the snow holdin' us back. Jus' lay down, Mr. Brownfeld; it's only 3.35."

A lady's eye peeped forth from the curtain of a nearby berth, and vanished instantly. Mr. Amidon, seeing it, plunged back into the shelter from which he had tumbled, and lay there trembling

—trembling, far more, because, instead of summer, it seemed winter; for Elm Springs Junction, it appeared to be a moving train on some unknown road, going God knew where, and for Florian Amidon, in his cottage-wait, it had the appearance of a somnambulistic wretch in his night-dresses, who was addressed by the unfamiliar porter as Mr. Brownfeld!

II

THE MYSTERY OF RATHERY AND BAYES

From his eyes did the glances of Faerie pass
And the Myriads lay on Eldon grass;
He lay in the bosom of Eldon Hill
He passed on the dewy brow his will
His small hands him was made with joy
The word gave mark to his wildest of joy
"Have glowing pictures, my shepherd hand
What hath kept it this old we didn't find?"
"Have glowing pictures, and jump into these
Black wind and rain clouds made free
To see with a dreamer to Eldon he
And ye know not the Myriads in Faerie!"
—The Three Tale of Three Thomas.

As Mr. Amidon sensed the forward movement of the train, in which he so strangely found himself, he had fits of impulse to leap out and take the next train back. But, back where? He had the assurance of his colored friend and brother that forward was New York. Backward was the void conjectural. Slowly the dawn whitened at the window. He raised the curtain and saw the rocks and fences and snow of a winter's landscape—saw them with a shock which, lying prone as he was, gave him the sensation of staggering. It was true, then: the thing he had still suspected as a nightmare was true. Where were all the weeks of summer and autumn? And (question of some pertinency?) where was Florian Amidon?

He groped about for his clothes. They were strange in color and texture, but, in such judgment as he could form while dressing in his berth, they fitted. He never could bear to go half dressed to the toilet-room as most men do, and stepped out of his berth fully apparelled—in a daily business overcoat of North-gray, a high turn-down collar and enameled shoes and a rather noticeable tie. Florian Amidon had always worn a decent buttoned-up frock and a polished sword of modest line, which his

handkercher kept in stock especially for him. He felt as if, in getting lost, he had got into the clothes of some other man—and that other one of much less quiet and old-fashioned tastes in dress.⁴ It made him feel as if it were he who had made the run to Canada with the bank's funds—*fortune*, disguised, sinking.

He looked, like an amateur pick-pocket, in the pockets of the coat, and found some letters. He gazed at them awhile, turning them over and over, wondering if he ought to peep at them. Then he put them back, and went into the smoking-room, where, finding himself alone, he turned up his vest as if it had been somebody else's vest when he was afraid of disturbing, and looked at the initials on the shirt-front. They were not "F. A.," as they ought to have been, but "E. B.!" He wondered which of the bags were his. Finding the button, he summoned the porter.

"George," said he, "bring my baggage in here."

And then he wondered at his addressing the porter in that drummer-like way—he was already saving up to the smart call—or damn; he was in doubt as to which it was.

The bags, when produced, showed three metal slides, sometimes seen, concealing the owner's name. Sweet stood upon Florean's brow as he slipped the plate back and found the name of Eugene Bransfield, Bellevue, Pennsylvania! A card-case, his pocketbook, all his linen and his hat—all articles of expensive and gorgeously quality, but strange to him—disclosed the same name or initials,

none of them his own. In the valise he found some business letter-heads, hastily engraved, of the Bransfield Oil Company, and Eugene Bransfield's name was there set forth as president and general manager.

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Florean, "am I innocent? Am I a robber and a murderer? During this time which has dropped out of my life, have I destroyed and despoiled this gentleman, and— and run off in his clothes? I must denounce myself!"

The porter came, and, by way of denouncing himself, Mr. Amidon clasped his waistcoat shut and buttoned it, snatched the catches of the bags, and pretended to busy himself with the letters in his pockets; and in doing so, he found in an inside vaspocket a long thin pocketbook filled with hundred-dollar bills, and a dainty-looking letter. It was addressed to Mr. Eugene Bransfield, was unopened, and headed, "To be Read *Ex Hocce*."

There was invitation, there was allurement, in the very superlatives. Clearly, it seemed, he ought to open and examine these letters. They might serve to clear up this mystery. He would begin with this.

"My Darling!" it began, without any other form of address—and was not this enough, beloved?—"My own Darling! I write this so that you may have something of me, which you can see and touch and kiss as you are borne further and further from me. Distance unbridged is such a terrible thing—any long

⁴ *Wardner's Note*—As reflecting light upon the personal characteristics of Mr. Florean Amidon, whose remarkable history is the subject-matter of this narrative I append a brief note by his college roommate and lifelong acquaintance, the well-known Dr. J. Vance Graydon, of Pleasant, Wisconsin. The note follows:

"At the time when the following story opens, Mr. Florean Amidon was about thirty years of age. Height, five feet ten and three-quarters inches; weight, one hundred and twenty-eight pounds. For general constitution and intellectual traits, see Weeks's & V. Includes admitted facts: student of the advanced section, prominent member of the English, painting and literary studies in his university. (See *Weeks's* attached.) Neurologically considered, family history of epilepsy (see *Weeks's* & V.) and you know nothing abnormal except that his father, a student, wrote an essay opposing the atomic theory, and a cousin is an epileptic. I repeat these facts as significant. Volitional and intellectual faculties largely developed. Inclined to be a man of strong will-power and self-control. The following facts may be noted as possibly symptomatic of neurotic traits: tremor in the hands of *Wardner* and *Bransfield* (see *Weeks's*) weakness to decide in financial matters of interest; nervous, pronounced marks of and emotional weakness during relations with *Bransfield* at young woman in study; evidence slipping in voluntary. No greater gain or personal improvement in the following way to be noted. Attention to mathematics, pronounced of great mastery of verbal expression, neurotic symptoms very marked and continuously neurotic, and greatly concerned as to approach *Bransfield* symptoms on account of eyes, but no stable evidence in connection. Taking the entire condition in the matter, the method and internal sense indicated.

The editor desires to say that upon further inspection of Doctor Graydon's very interesting note of this case. It may appear to some mind as a curious record.

distance; and more than our hands may reach and deep across is interstellar space to me. You said last night that all beauty, all sweetness, all things delectable and enticing and fair, all things which allure and tempt, are so bound up in little me, that surely the very giants of steel and steel would be drawn back to me, instead of bearing you away. Ah, my Eugene! You wondered why I put my hands behind me, and would not see your outstretched arms! Now that you are gone, and will not return for so long—until so near the day when I may be all that I am capable of becoming to you, let me tell you—I was afraid!

"Not of you, dearest, not of you—for with all your ardor of wooing (and no girl ever had a more perfect lover—I shall always thank God for that mixture of Lancelot and Sir Galahad in you which makes every moment in your presence a delight), I always knew that you could leave me like a missile boy, and, while laughing for me, stay away. But I—when you have sometimes complained of a little for my coldness—had I not looked above your eyes, and put my hands behind me, I should have clung to you, dear, I was afraid, and never have allowed you to go as you are now going, and made you feel that I am not the perfect woman that you describe to me, as me. Even now, I fear that this letter will do me harm in your heart; but all the lover in me—and girls inherit from their fathers as well as from their mothers—cries out in me to woo you; and you must forget this, only at such times of tenderness while you are gone as you will sometimes have, when one embrace would be worth a world. Then read or remember this, as my return-clasp for such thoughts.

"Bridges, may I not, now that you are away from me, give you a glimpse of that side of my soul which a girl is taught to hide? This was the 'woman's nest among the reeds' which Little Kille meant to show to that lover who, maybe, never came. Ah, Mrs. Browning was a woman, and knew! (Mind, dear, it's Mrs. Browning I speak of)

"Sometimes, when the Knight has

come, and the wife wishes to show the glories of her soul, 'the wild swan has deserted, and a cat has gnawed the reed.' Let the wild and flowery little pool of womanhood which is yours—poor, dearest—grow somewhat less strange to you than it would have been—but evening—so that when you see me again you will see it as a part of me, and, without a word or look from me, know me even more than you now do.

"Yours,

"Elizabeth."

Florian read it again and again. Sometimes he blushed—not with shame, but with the embarrassment of a girl—at the fervid eloquence. And then he would feel a twinge of envy for this Eugene Broadfield who could be to such a girl "a perfect lover."

"From one soon to be a bride," said he to himself, "to the man she loves. It's the sweetest letter ever written. I wonder how long ago she wrote it! Here's the date: 7th February, 1881. Odd, that she should mistake the year! But it was the 7th, no doubt. By the way, I don't know the day of the week or month, or what month it is! Now, boy! Is that the morning paper?"

He seized the paper feverishly, held it crushed in hand until the boy left him, and then spread it out looking for the date. It was February (the 8th, 1881! The letter had been written last evening. Whatever had happened to this man Broadfield, had occurred within the past sixteen hours. And, great God! where had Florian Amidon been since June, 1880? All was dark; and, as sympathetically with it, blackness came over his eyes, and he reeled into New York to a dead faint.

III

ANY PORT IN A STORM

"Come, John, as I ordered! Our plans are fixed."

Our catastrophe so fairly lamped with promise. As some more headland loomed 'neath which

we creased, with waving palms and budding bays

The bounding light on holds the jewel up.
'Your lady's willing finger' came the stage
To set your eye to sport.

Letelier
 Are stronger to my lips, and then quite
 To not and eye and mind, I tell thee, Calam.
 This play of thine is one in which no man
 Should swagger on, trusting the prompter's
 voice.

For mountains shaped with the back up the
 moon.

Out of the torrid south the light is white:
 The lightning speaks in death, the thunder roars
 The very rocks whom the anger lights;
 The points are silent with glass, and planets rush
 We sleep are dead! I speak with falling tongues
 Their crafty shiftness! Most desired rest,
 This just you offer bids her play with death!
 I'll name it!

—*Verse of Calam.*

"Omen" round all right, now, eh?"
 said the learned-looking porter. "Will
 you go to the Calamet House, as usual,
 eh? Calage walkin', if you feel well
 enough to move, eh."

"I'm quite well," said Mr. Amidon,
 though he did not look it, "and will go
 to the—what hotel did you say?"

"Calamet, eh; I know you make it
 ye' headachetake that."

"Quite right," said Mr. Amidon; "of
 course. Where's the carriage; and my
 grip?"

He had never heard of the Calamet;
 but he wanted, more than anything else
 then, privacy in which he might collect
 his thoughts and get himself in hand,
 for his whole being was in something
 like chaos. On the way, he stopped the
 cab several times to buy papers. All
 showed the fatal date. He arrived at
 the palatial hotel in a cab filled with
 papers, from which his bewildered
 countenance peered forth like that of a
 canary-bird in the nesting-season. He
 was scarcely within the door, when
 obsequious servants seized upon his
 luggage, and vied with one another for
 the privilege of waiting upon him.

"Why, how do you do?" said the clerk,
 in a manner eloquent of delighted recogni-
 tion. "Your old room, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think so," said Mr. Amidon.

The clerk whirled the register around,
 and pointed with his pen, said:

"Right there, Mr. Brausefeld."

Mr. Amidon's pen stopped midway
 in the downward stroke of a capital F.

"I think," said he, "that I'll not
 register at present. Let me have checks
 for my luggage, please—I may not stay
 more than an hour or so."

"As you please," said the clerk. "Here
 are some telegrams, sir. Come this
 morning."

He took and eyed the yellow envelopes
 with "E. Brausefeld" scrawled upon
 them, as if they had been internal
 machines; but he made no movement
 toward opening them. Something in
 the clerk's look admonished him that his
 own was extraordinary. He felt that
 he must seek solitude. To be called by
 this new and strange name; to have
 thrust upon him the acting of a part
 in which he knew none of the lines and
 dared not reduce the character; and
 all under these circumstances made dark
 and sinister by the mysterious misad-
 justments of time and place; the pos-
 session of another man's property; the
 haunting fear that in it somewhere were
 crime and peril—these things, he thought,
 would drive him out of his senses, unless
 he could be alone.

"I think I'll take the room," said he.

"If any one calls?" queried the clerk.

"I'm not in," said Amidon, gathering
 up the telegrams. "I do not wish to
 be disturbed on any account."

Five years! What did it mean?
 There must be some mistake. But the
 track in the ceiling show of time, the
 change from summer to winter, and
 from the dropping to sleep at Elm
 Springs Junction to the awakening in
 the car—there could be no mistake
 about these. He sat in the room to
 which he had been shown, buried in the
 immense pile in the strange city, as
 quiet as a heron in a pool, perhaps the
 most solitary man on earth, these
 thoughts running in a bewildering circle
 through his mind. The doses of the
 paper—might they not have been
 changed by some silly trick of new
 journalism, some striving for effect,
 like the agreement of all the people in
 the world to say "Hoo" all at once to
 the moon? He ran his eyes over the
 columns. The twentieth century had
 stolen upon him as he slept—if, indeed,
 he had slept—there could be no doubt
 of that.

He found his hands trembling again,
 and, fearing another collapse, threw him-
 self upon the bed. Then, as drowsiness

stole upon him, he thought of the five years gone since last he had yielded to that feeling, and started up, afraid to sleep. He saw lying on the table the unopened telegrams, and tore them open. Some referred to sales of oil, and other business transactions; one was to inform Bransfield that a man named Alford would not meet him in New York as promised, and one was in cipher.

He took from his pocket the letters of Bransfield, and read them. One or two were invitations to social functions in Bellevue. One was a bill for dues in a boating-club; another contained the celebrated pedigree of a horse owned in Kentucky. A very brief one was in the same handwriting as the message he had first read, was signed "E. W.," and merely said that she would be at home that evening. But most of them related to the business of the Bransfield Oil Company, and referred to transactions in oil.

He lay back upon the bed again, and thought, thought, thought, beginning with the furthest stretch of memory, and coming down carefully and consecutively—to the yawning chasm which had opened in his life and swallowed up five years. Time and again, he worked down to the chasm, and was forced to stop. He had heard of loss of memory from illness, but this was nothing of the sort. He was tired and nervous that night in Elm Springs Junction, but not ill; and now he was in robust health. Perhaps some great fit of passion had torn that obliterating furrow through his mind. Perhaps in those five years he had become changed from the man of strict integrity who had so well managed the Handhurst Bank, into the monster who had robbed Eugene Bransfield of—his clothes, his property, the most dearly personal of his possessions—these, certainly (for Amidon knew the rule of evidence which brands as a thief the possessor of stolen goods); and who could tell of what else? Letters, bags, purses, money—these any vulgar criminal might have, and bear no deeper guilt than that of theft; but, the clothes? Mr. Amidon

shuddered as his logic carried him on from deduction to deduction—to murder, and the ghastly putting-away of murder's fruit. In some way, he felt sure, Eugene Bransfield's body must have been removed from those sorry clothes of his, before Florian Amidon could have put them on, and with them damned the personality of their former owner.

And here entered mystery deeper still—the strange deception he seemed to impose upon the dead man's acquaintances. And this filled him, somehow, with the most abject dread and fear. Bransfield seemed to have been a well-known man; for porters and clerks in New York do not call the obscure countryman by name. To step out upon the street was, perhaps, to run into the very arms of some one who would penetrate the disguise. Yet he could not long remain in this room; his very retirement—any extraordinary behavior (and how did he know Bransfield's ordinary course?)—would soon advertise his presence. Amidon walked to the window and peered down into the street. His eyes traveled to the opposite windows, and finally to the blind space of absent-mindedness became fixed upon a gold-and-black sign which he began stupidly spelling out, over and over. "Madame la Claire," it read, "Châtrévoisnet and Occultist." Not an idea was associated in his mind with the sign until the word "mystery," "mystery," began sounding in his ear—naturally enough, one would say, under the circumstances. Then the letters of the word floated before his eyes; and finally he consciously saw the full sign stretching across two windows: "Madame la Claire, Châtrévoisnet and Occultist. All Mysteries Solved."

Florian stared at this sign, until he became conscious of deep weariness at so long standing upon his feet. Then he saw, blossoming the multiplying lights of an early winter's dusk—as numbly had the time slipped by. And in the greenish close of this dreadful day, the desperate and perplexed man stole timidly down the stairways—avoiding the elevator—and across the street, to the place of the "Occultist."

IV

AN ADVENTURE IN BERLIN

The city world stands motionless when Fate
 Flings down to it her lightning bolts
 Of doom.

But we, my love, will leave our bodies unscathed,
 And glide our beings from these dreams
 Of death.

Should any charge us with a childish awe
 And bid us track our knowledge like a deer,
 We'll lightly laugh to mock the wraiths of
 History.

And, loath to yield, we'll continue in Mystery
 —When the Muses speak.

The house of the "Occultist" was one of a long row, all alike, which reminded the observer of an exercise in perspective, as one glances down the stretch of balustraded piazzas. Arndon walked straight across the street from the hotel, and created the sight of stake up to the fourth floor. There was no elevator. The darkness of the place gave him a vague impression of being engaged in the fine arts. A glimpse of an interior brought with Navajo blankets, Pueblo pottery, Dakota beadwork, and barbaric scenes the sound of a soprano practicing Marchetti exercises, an east wind through an open door and flanked by a Grand Rapids folding-bed with a plaster bust atop; and a pervasive scent of nicotine, unaccounted for, and may or may not have justified, the impression. On the fourth floor the scent shaded off toward sandalwood, the sounds toward silence, Bohemia toward Bessarabia. He walked in twilight, on inch-deep nap, to a door on which glowed in soft, purple, self-emitted radiance, the words:

MADAME LE CLAIRE
 ENTER

The invitation was plain, and he opened the door. As he did so, the deep mellow note of a gong filled the place with a gentle alarm. It was sound with noise eliminated, and matched, to the ear, the velvet of the carpet.

The room into which he looked was dark, save for light reflected from a marble ball set in a high recess in the ceiling. None of the lamps could be seen, whose rays illuminated the ball, and the white globe itself was hung so high as the beams that none of its direct

rays reached the corners of the apartment. A Persian rug lay in the center, and took the faintest light. There were no sharp edges of shadow, but instead there was a softly graduated penumbra, deepening into stark straight across was a doorway with a portiere, beyond was another, and still farther, a third, all made visible in silhouette by the light in a fourth room, seen as at the end of a tunnel.

Across this gossamer-barred arch of light, a black figure was projected, and swelled as it neared in silent approach. It came through the last portiere, on into the circle of light, and stood, a turbaned negro, bowing low toward the visitor.

"*Mme. le Claire,*" said Arndon, feebly; "may I speak with her?"

There was no reply, unless a respectful courtesy might be taken for one. Then the dumb headman, carrying with him the atmosphere of a Bedouin tent, disappeared, litiged, reappeared, and beckoned Arndon to follow. As they passed the first portiere, that neither and gentle gong-note rolled softly again from some remote distance. At the second doorway, it repeated nearer, if not louder. At the third, as Arndon stepped into the lighted room, it filled the air with a golden vibrancy. It was as if invisible ministers had gone before to announce him.

Arndon took one long look at the scene in the fourth room, and a great wave of unbelieved rolled across his mind. Through this long day of shocks and surprises, he had reached that stage of amazement where the evidential value of sensory impressions is destroyed. He covered his eyes with his hands, expecting that the phantoms before him might pass with vision, and that with vision's return might come the sweet, familiar commonplace of his commonplace life.

The room seemed to have no windows, and the rear of the New York street outside was gone, or faint as the burn of a fire. The walls were hung with fabrics of wool or silk, in dull greens and reds, and the floor was spread with rugs. With mouth redly opening at



Drawn by Grace Gould

Blackmore came over his eyes, and he rode into New York in a dead faint.

1894

him, and eyes staring opalescent gleams, lay a great tiger-skin rug, upon which, on a kind of dais, sat a woman—a woman whose eyes sought he in a steady regard which flashed a thrill through his whole body as he gazed. For she seemed to emanate from the tiger-skin, as a butterfly from the chrysalis.

Her dress was of some combination of black and yellow which carried upward the tones of the great rug. Her bare arms—long, and tapering to like wrists and hands—were shaped by dull-gold bracelets of twisted serpents. Over shapely shoulders, the flesh of which looked white and young, there was thrown a wrap like leathery snow, from under which drooped down over the girlish bosom a necklace that seemed of pearl. The face was fair, its pallor tinged with red at lips, and rose on cheeks. The eyes, luminous and steady, shone out through heavy dark lashes, from under brows of black, and seemed, at that first glance, of Oriental darkness.

A great mass of dark-brown hair encircled the rather small face, and even in his first look, he noted at the temples twin arcs of golden-blond which, carried out like rays in the fluffy halo about her brow, reappeared in all the trelage and turnings of the involved pile which crowned the graceful head. The yellow-and-black of the tiger appeared there, from head to foot. It was afterward that he found out something of the secret of the peculiar fascination in the great dark eyes. One of them was gray, with that greenish tinge which has been regarded as the token of genius. The other was of a mottled golden-brown, with lights like those in the tiger's eye. In both, in any but strong light, the velvet-black pupils spread out, and pushed the iris back to a thin margin; and then they varied, from gray or brown, to that herald night which Arcton now saw in them, as he stepped within the doorway, and looked so long upon her, as she sat like a model for the Queen of the Jungle, that under

other circumstances the gaze would have seemed rude. Some sense of this, breaking through his bewilderment, made him bow.

"Mrs. Le Claire?" said he.

"The same," said she. "How can I serve you, sir?"

The voice, a soft contralto, was the complement of the steady regard of the eyes. As she spoke, she rose and stepped toward him, down from the little dais to the rug. She rose, not with the effort which marks the act in most, but lightly, as a flower rises from the touch of a breeze. She was tall and lithe, and all the curves of her figure were long and low—once more suggesting the soft strength of the tigress. But when speech parted the lips, a smile which overgilded her face won him.

"How can I serve you, my friend?" she repeated.

"I am in great trouble," said he.

"Yes," she purred.

"I saw your sign," he went on. "And I want you to tell me where I have been since June, 1886—and who is Eugene Braverton. Did I tell him—or only rob him? And who is Elizabeth?"

She had stepped close to him now.

"Yes?" said she, "I think we shall be able to tell you all. But, are you well?"

"I have had no breakfast," said he.

"When I found that I had lost five years—I forgot. And—once—I fainted. I'm not quite—well, I'm afraid!"

Mrs. Le Claire stepped to the wall and pushed a button. The turbaned Hindoos reappeared.

"Aaron," said she, "tell Professor Hatherwick that Mr.—Mr.—"

"Amidon," said Florian—"Amidon is my name."

"—Amidon will dine with us. He has some very interesting things for us to look into. And have dinner served at once."

Aaron! and dinner! and Hatherwick! The delicious vulgarity of the names was sweet music. For he remembered that Florian was a banker, and a man of position; and sandalwood, Nardana, Nardana and Elizabeth were all for the green wound of his mystery—which, in all conscience, was bad enough in aid of Hæd! Some comb-

dence in the realities of things returned to him, but he followed Mrs. Le Claire like a faithful hound.

V

ACQUAINTANCE, RECOGNITION

Now, Red-Back Johnson's spot had never known such a faint heart's game.

And when dinner was the summons of the gestures of the hands.

For, notwithstanding his stout form, his left hand seemed to strive.

While his right hand rested lightly on the ready terry-awl.

"Mr. Chairman and Committee," Mr. Johnson said, said he.

"It is true, I've laughed up some with this party's property.

It is true that general and theoretical and theoretical to arrive.

"Was some agreement shortly" with the American party?

But let us to my business and away for my dinner," said he.

"I am sorry," said Red-Back, "in my personality."

—The Address of Red-Back Johnson.

Mrs. Le Claire led Mr. Amidon to the next room, turned him over to Aaron (now wonderfully healed of his dumbness) with a gesture of dismissal; and he was ushered by the negro into a most modern-looking chamber, in which was a brass bedstead with a snowy counterpane.

"Dinner will be served in ten minutes," said Aaron.

They were waiting for him in the little dining-room, when he was ushered through the door by Aaron's obsequious bow. The tigress Le Claire advanced from a bay-window, bringing a slender man with stooped shoulders.

"Papa," she said, "this is Mr. Amidon, whom I have induced to dine with us, Mr. Amidon, Professor Hatherwick."

Professor Hatherwick was bent, and much bleached, faded and wrinkled. His eyes seemed both enormous in size and sunk almost to his temples, by reason of being seen through the thickest of glasses. His lank, grayish hair, of no particular color, but resembling autumnal roadside grasses, hung thinly from a high and asymmetrical head, and straggled dejectedly down into a wig of beard on chin and lip—a beard which any short-sighted man might well be supposed to have failed

Picture by Emma Langford

A woman whose eyes sought him in a steady regard which defied a look through his white hood.





Illustration by Thomas B. Smith

"Home body in which he had lost himself while on an excursion in search of parallel cases.

to observe, and therefore to have neglected to share. When Miss de Claire stepped to leading him forward, he halted, and feeling himself forced into the air as if for Amidon's hand, though quite ten feet from him, he murmured:

"I am honored to meet you, sir."

"Evidently German," thought Amidon.

"I understand," said the professor, opening the conversation, as Miss de Claire peered the tea, "that you had had some interesting experiences in the realm of the supernatural?"

Amidon's tension of mind, which had left him under the compulsion of the woman's mastery of him, returned at the professor's remark.

"I have been dead," said he, "since the 27th of June, 1886!"

Miss de Claire stared at him in uncomprehending amazement. The professor calmly dipped toast in his tea.

"So?" said he. "Five years. Good! The case will establish some important principles. Will you be so kind as to tell us the circumstances?"

"Oh, papa!" broke in the lady. "You must wait until after dinner. I saw Mr. Amidon was weak and disturbed, and, I thought—hungry. So I asked him to stay."

"I have eaten nothing but this," said Mr. Amidon, "since June 27, 1886——"

"So," said the professor, calmly. "He will have an important case."

"I saw the sign," said Amidon. "All Mysteries Betwixt," and I came here——"

"De sign," said the professor. "In our conception to be spirit of commercialism, and to compete with systems. It was Clara's idea. But some mysteries we do not attempt. In the realm of the supernatural, however, we go up against almost any proposition. I am Chemical Superintendent of Supernal Engineering; Clara is co-assistant. I make notes, and Clara does as she likes about following down. You will, at your convenience, tell us all you can of your case. I will analyze, classify, and designate; she will narrate."

It was deep in the evening when the professor was through with his diagnosis. He made copious notes of Amidon's story. Several times his daughter called him away from some book in which he had lost himself while on an excursion in search of parallel cases. At last he paused, his face expressing the triumph of a naturalist at the discovery of a new beetle.

"You are not in the least insane," said he, with the air of telling Florian something hard to believe, "and you had none of the stigmas of telecommunication. I would say that you are not a grimald—

not much of a gristled anywhere, and properly not at all."

"Thank you! Oh, thank you!" fervently exclaimed Ansdon.

"It is a case," went on the professor, "of dual personality. For five years you had properly been absent from Headlight. You had been somewhere?"

"Where, where?" cried Ansdon.

"Do not fear," said Miss In Claire, laying her hand on his arm. "It is a case of dual personality, we shall soon find out all about it. You have mysteriously disappeared. Many men do. There was Lieutenant Rogers, of the navy; and Ansel Burns, of Ohio, who woke up in Kentucky in his own state, under the name of Brooks—Brooks' name, you know."

"And Ellen, of Bergen," said the professor, "who was lost for a year, and discovered himself in the pailment of a cook in a lumber-camp in Minnesota, water in name of Chameleon. Oh, there are many such! To superstitious mind, to operations of witch are normally below the threshold of consciousness, suddenly taken control. Foul! you are another man! You had been Smith, you are now Chame. As Chame you remember nothing of Smith. You go on, guided by instinct, and to preoccupied semi-consciousness of a subconsciousness——"

"Oh, papa!" said the tiger-lady. "these are awful words—here sick men!"

"Yell," reversed Batherwick, dropping into what he regarded as the vernacular, "you go on as Chame, all right all right. Some day, somewhere—in the case in a sleeping-car—you wake up Smith again. You now do not remember Chame or is Chame life. You are all worked up—but you call it—dis-bargasted. You come to Miss In Claire. Yet does she do? She calls to superstitious mind up above the threshold of consciousness, and you are restored to the Chame blaze of mentality. Hypnotism, hypnotism, that is not does it?"

"And shall I stay—Jones?"

"No, no!" said Miss In Claire. "I will restore you. But while you are—Jones—I shall find out all you want to know about the—Jones—life, and I will tell you when you become yourself again. You will learn all about Ballvale, and Brownfield, and——"

"And Elizabeth?" asked Ansdon.

Miss In Claire paused.

"Yes," said she, with much less cordiality. "I suppose so, if you want to know about Elizabeth."



Drawn by Anna Davenport

And Elizabeth?



THE OCCULTATION OF FLORIAN AMIDON

By HERBERT QUICK

SYNOPSIS—The opening chapters relate how Florian Amidon, having in a small Western city, started on a short journey in June, 1906, loved the best of a position and became nothing more until he arrived at a sleeping-car approaching New York city, in February, 1921. He discovers that he has the clothes and other effects of a Eugene Bramfield, oil-dealer, of Belvidere, Pennsylvania. To add to the dilemma, in Amidon's pockets are love letters signed "Elizabeth." Arriving in New York, he runs an "oddish," "Mme. la Claire, and her father, Professor Bismarck, who diagnoses the case as one of dual personality and promised to restore Amidon to the Bramfield consciousness in order to investigate the mystery.

VI

THE JONAS PLANE OF MENTALITY

My body a cone
 Encompasses the ether
 Aligned in lovely separation
 Retained their form
 Are past the stars.
 When Your' glow' the shafts of Mars
 Ours, midway night
 Sheds in my sight
 One glimmer revealed the source of light
 How! to be true
 On my I rise
 By going to my body a cone
 —Song from The Creation

regarded by the masculine reader of the unregenerate sort (though to such far be it from me to appeal) as an operation of all painful. But Mr. Amidon was not of the unregenerate sort.

"Now," said Mme. la Claire, "sit down in the armchair, and in a few minutes you will feel a sensation of drowsiness. Soon you will sleep. Think with all your power that you are to sleep."

She was sitting in a very high chair, he in a low one, so that her eyes were above his. The professor was blind with the shadows of some corner, in short self-effacement, with a note-book in his hand

THE process of bringing the "Jonas plane of mentality" apparatus in Mr. Amidon would not have been



Scene by Anna Gould

"The light and shadow and depth of the woman's eyes drew all thoughts to them."

Amidon tried to think with all his power that he was to sleep; but the lights and shadows and depths of the woman's eyes drew all thoughts to them. Uncle Toby, looking for the move in the eye of the Widow Wadman, must have felt as did our wandering Florian. Never before had he noted for more than a fleeting glance the light that lies in woman's eyes. Now those limpid orbs met his in a regard, kindly, steady, eloquent of unutterable things. He noted the dark, arched, above sweep of the eyebrow, the long, dark lashes curved faintly upward, the shining whiteness in the corners, and the wondrous lines. The gray was dark like a moonlit sky, the other like the same sky flecked with clouds, and filled with the golden smoke of some far-off conflagration; and at the inner margin of both, the black of the dilated pupils seemed to spread out into the iris in rays of lustrous blackness. They seemed to him like twin worlds—great, capacious, mysterious, alluring, absorbing. Behind the feathery curtains of those eyes lay all the lovely things of which he had ever thought or dreamed—the things which sculptors and poets and painters see, and seek to express. And without changing his gaze, he saw below the eyes the dewy cheek, and the red lips so sweetly curved. A new thrill ran through the man, and a new light came into his eyes. Miss de Claire blushed.

"Are you thinking," said she, "of going to sleep?"

"I beg your pardon," said he; "I was thinking—I am afraid I was not!"

"Try again," said she; "and please control your thoughts. Think that you are—going—to sleep. To sleep—Sleep! Sleep!—Sleep—sleep!"

Now Amidon's eyes sought hers again, and held there; and the twin worlds, sphered in some slowly turning orbit, seemed swirling in their native space. Now the cheeks and hair and mouth came out in their places, returning to distinctness like features of a face in a scene. Now the eyes became twin stars again, casting on him once more the effulgence of their binary glow.

And now eyes and face and hair, and Miss de Claire—all passed away; and Florian Amidon became as naught, and the night lady and the faded professor played with the thing which had been he, as upon a machine. The pillar of Hawthorne society, the leader now five years lost, the bewildered wreck of the sleeping-man, was now, by his own act, given over as passively as some inert instrument, body and soul, to the guidance and manipulation of this steady "condition" not four hours known to him—while outside danced the muffled rear of the human system which sweeps and whirls and eddies through Manhattan. So stripped of stability was the pillar, that he was now a mere feather of humanity, self-abandoned to the sleep of the storm of the modern Babylon. Miss de Claire questioned, Amidon answered (or something answered for him), and Professor Blackbeard wrote in his book—wrote the date of "de Chasse's time of necessity."

"Dis his enough," said the professor, "for vance. Pong him to!"

Miss de Claire leaned back, gave her subject a long look, and then, walking to him, took his head tenderly in her hands. With the left, she held his forehead; the fingers of the right swept insistently among the curls resting upon his neck, swept thence over to his brow, and down across his eyelids, closing them; and Amidon sat, motionless as a statue, and almost as still.

"Right!" said Miss de Claire, sharply. "Wake!"

Amidon opened his eyes wearily.

"When are you going to begin?" said he.

"We are t'rough," said the professor. "We know it all!"

"And Brandeis?" Did I—?"

"You have done him nothing," said the professor. "You are all ready. You need not fear—"

"And Elizabeth?" suggested Amidon, as passing to the thing of next importance.

"It is near morning," said Miss de Claire, "and you are prostrated. We are all very tired. Aaron must take you to your hotel. You must sleep.

Never fear, no harm is coming to you. When you wake, come to me, and I will tell you all about it.—'All Mysteries Solved,' you know. Good night; you will sleep late in the morning."

VII

ENTER THE LEGAL MIND

The need of three nerves seems so large
As when the patient in some distant way
Is mitigated the harshness of the charge
That every nation level yielded pay!

The man who dares to go to the prison, a charge
Should bring back what he went for—
Should stay!

The need of three nerves seems so large
As when the patient in some distant way

Was, man o' warship the risks upon the large,
If from the beam the jibbed shivers he cry,
Oh blood upon the water's white wings
Covered by white and white bright wings—

The need of three nerves seems so large
As when the patient in some distant way
—Reminds to R—

Morning passed to noon, and the day aged into afternoon, before Amidon rose from the deep sleep which (according to Le Chaine's prediction) followed his evening with her and the professor. With that odd sense of bewilderment which the early rise feels at this violation of habit, he went into the café for his belated breakfast. Expectant to finish the meal so that he might haste to the promised interview, he studied the menu, and with his eye scanned the room for a waiter—failing to hasten even the slightest glance at a man seated opposite. This fact, however, did not prevent the stranger from scrutinizing Amidon's face, his dress, and even his hands, as if each minutest detail were vitally important. He even dropped his napkin so as to make an excuse for looking under the table, and then getting a good view of Florian's boots. Finally he spoke, as if continuing a broken-off conversation.

"As I said a while ago," he remarked, "Reverend father short of being a poet, just as a marble-cutter fails short of being a sculptor. You were quoting 'Love Among the Ruins,' as the train stopped at Elm Springs Junction; or was it 'Evelyn'?"

Amidon's eyes, during this apparently

aimless disquisition, had been drawn from his meal to the speaker. He saw an elderly gentleman, clothed in the black frock-coat and black tie of the rural lawyer of the old school. His eyes shot keen and kindly glances from the deep archway of great white brows, and his mouth was hidden under a snowy mustache. His features made up for a somewhat marked poverty of shape by a luxuriance of ruddy color, the culminating point of which was to be found in the broad and fleshy nose. His voice, soft and gentle when he began, swelled out, as he spoke, into something of the orator's ardent. When Amidon looked at him, the speaker returned the gaze in full measure, and leaning across the table, pointed his finger at his auditor, and slowly uttered the words,—"as—the train—stopped—at—Elm Springs Junction!"

"Why, Judge Hodge?" exclaimed Amidon, "can this be you?"

"Can it be I?" exclaimed the judge, "Can it be me! No difficulty about that. Never mind the handshaking just yet—after a while, maybe. When it comes to the can-it-be part, how about you? How about the past five years, and Jennie Baggs keeping a place for you every meal for all this time, up to the present hour? I tell you, Florian, telling me down in that case of Amidon vs. Gattermole, without a scrap of evidence, and getting me licked by a young practitioner who studied in my office, was bad—was damnable——; but an only sister, Florian! and not one word in five years!"

"She's well, then, Jennie is?"

"She's as well, Florian, as a woman with the sorrow you've brought to her, and the mother of two infants, can be. But why do you ask?—why do you ask?—why is it necessary to go through the work of emphasis of asking?"

"Children, eh?" said Florian. "Good for Jennie! And how's Baggs?"

"Oh, Baggs, yes—why, Baggs has come through it all with his health about unimpaired. Baggs has! But no Baggs court of inquiry is going to switch me off the examination I'm now conducting; and I tell you, Mr. Amidon,

you can't dodge me. What double life took you away from home, and property, and everything?"

"Judge Blodgett," said Mr. Andison, in that low voice which with the English language is known as the danger-signal the world over, "the term 'double life' has a meaning which is insulting. Don't use it again."

"Well, well, Florian," said the judge, evidently pleased, "containing the notion to strike that out, the question remains. You aren't obliged to answer,

There may be complications; I may need your help. You are the one man in all the world that I was just wishing for."

"Complications, ah?" said the judge. "Well, well! Let us see!"

And now he dropped into the old manner so well known to his companion as his office style. Piece by piece, he drew from Andison his story. He dropped back to previous parts of the narrative, and omitted repetitions. He started over crucial points as if he did not see their bearing, and then artfully



Drawn by Owen Leach

Elizabeth Wadsworth. . . . Tell of the new revelation of truth and twenty-three!

you know, but you know, too, what not answering it means?"

"Judge," said Andison, after a long pause, "to say that I don't know where I have been, or what I have been doing, since June 27, 1899, until yesterday morning when I came to my senses in a moving sleeping-car, won't satisfy you; but it's the truth."

The judge looked off toward the ceiling in the manner of a jurist considering some complex argument, but was silent.

"Now I have found a way," said Andison, "of finding out all about this. Come with me, and let's find out

summed up the revelations of the tale, but was always corrected.

"The prosecution is obliged to rest its case," said he, at last. "You're not crazy, or all my studies in disease of the mind have done me no good. Your story hangs together as no fiction could. To believe you, breaks us both as lunatics. Come on and let's see what your momentary frenzy has to say. As a specialist in facts, I'm a drowning man catching at a straw. Come on, mesmerism, or astrology, or Moslem magic-dance, it's all one to me!"

Up the stairs again, this time with

Judge Madgett, partly smothering the air, and shy of both Belovale and Bannock. Into the presence of Miss de Claire, now gowned appropriately for the morning, and looking—extraordinary. It is true, with her particularized hair and luminous eyes, but—not so jingly as when she greeted the despairing sight of Amidon the night before.

"Madam, and sir," said the judge, "as Mr. Amidon's friend and legal adviser, I am here to protect his interests."

"Well, good!" said the professor. "But to matter under consideration is psychological, not legal. However, if you are interested in the realm of the supernatural, if you care for mental science—"

"Sir," said the judge, "I may almost claim to be a specialist (so far as a country practitioner is permitted to specialize) in souls and psychic phenomena, since I had the honor to represent the proponents in the will case of *Snake vs. Snake*. But it's only fair to say that I regard hypnosis as hocus, only fair."

"Good, good!" said the professor, delightedly. "To demonstrate to an honest and intelligent skeptic, is to master of brilliancy. We will now proceed to demonstrate. Here is our friend! Here Amidon awakened in a car after five years of (hypnosis); he has another man's clothes, another man's pocket, letters—wait all. He gives to Miss de Claire and Bartholwick. He is hypnotized out of to Amidon blame of being, and into another. He is made to give himself away. Now we will proceed to deal about his life since he was lost—in it a deal, no?"

"Hush!" warned the judge.

"Go on," cried Amidon; "tell me the story!"

"Well," said the professor, "for four weeks after you left Elm Springs Chautauk, you wandered—yes, Clara?"

"Wandered," said Clara, "and to so many places that I can't remember them. Then you found us, or traced of it—I can't get that very plainly—on a farm at Dean's Ferry, Pennsylvania; and bought an option on the farm. Then you opened an office in

Bellevue, and have been there in the oil-business ever since."

"How's he been doing financially?" interjected the judge.

"He has made a fortune," said Clara. "I believe him to be one of the principal men of the town, socially and in a business way. He didn't tell me this, but we think the circumstances seem to indicate it."

"To circumstances," said the professor, tilting a pen, "show it."

"How is it," said the judge, "that no one has ever heard of his Bellevue career out in Hamtramck, if he's so prominent? We read, out there, and even in a while one of us goes outside the incorporation."

"His name," said Miss de Claire, "is Belovale is not Florian Amidon."

"What is it?" cried Amidon. "Tell it to me!"

Miss de Claire restrained him with a calm glance.

"It is Eugene Brandford," said she.

"It is your own clothes," cried the professor gleefully, "your own pocket, your own correspondence!"

Amidon was feeling in his breast-pocket for something. He withdrew his hand holding in it a letter, and looked from it to Miss de Claire, questioningly.

"Oh, yes!" said she, not quite in her usual manner, "It's yours. It's from Miss Elizabeth Waldron, of Bellevue, your affianced wife."

"Ah!" said the judge. "Now will you get mad when I speak of a double life? Engaged, hey?"

"I never saw the—the lady in my life," was the reply; "so how can I be—can I be—engaged to her?"

"In to Amidon blame of gaudiness," said the professor, "you are straggled. In to Brandford personality, you are—Good is learned, you are stuck on her, stuck on her—not, Clara? Was he not gawdy? Only Clara cut it short in to demonstration; but as a letter, in to Brandford blame, you are not you call her stuff."

"You had better read the gentleman your notes," said Miss de Claire, coldly. "And please excuse me. I hope to see

you both again." And with a shrug and a bow, she swept from the room.

Blodgett, freely analytical, wrote word of the professor's notes. Florian sat with the letter from Miss Waldron in his hand, lost in thought. Sometimes his face burned with blushes, sometimes it paled with anxiety. His eyes ran over the letter full of quaint orders; and

when he thought of replying to them—or leaving them unanswered—his brow went white and his heart sick. What should he do? What could he do?

When they returned to the hotel, the judge was in a fever of excitement.

"I tell you, Florian," said he, "I believe the professor is right about this. It seems that there are precedents, you know—cases on all fours with yours. When I went to the telephone, up there, I called up Stacy & Stacy's and asked 'em to get me Dan's and Handstreet's reports on your Bellevue business. It ought to be up here pretty soon. There may be something down there worth looking after, and needing attention."

"Perhaps," growled Ambion. "Do you know that I'm engaged—?"

"One of the things I referred to," said the judge.

"—to a lady, down there, whom I shouldn't know if I were to meet her out in the hall? If I go back to Handstreet, she is put under a cloud as a deserted woman—to say nothing of her halings.



Illustration by Howard Chandler Christy

"That sad complex was the system of notes built up by the professor and the judge."

And if I go back to Bellevue—my God, Judge, how can I go back, and take my place in a society where every one knows me, and I know nobody, and be a lover to a girl who may be—anything, you know, but who has the highest sort of claims on me, and a nature, I'm sure, capable of the keenest suffering or pleasure—how can I?"

"Message, sir, from Stacy & Stacy," said a messenger-boy at the door.

Judge Blodgett took open the envelope, and read the telegraphic reports.

"M—n—n— Y—e—et," said he. "It'll take diplomacy, Florian, diplomacy. But, if these reports are to be trusted, and I guess they are, you've got about ten times as much at Bellevue as you have at Handstreet. And, as you say, the lady has claims. As an honorable man—an engaged man, who has received the plighted troth of a pure young heart—and a good fiancée, this Bellevue life demands resumption at your hands. Prepare, fellow citizen, to meet the difficulties of the situation."

VIII

POURING FOR THE FLAME

Yes, all her words are sweet and true
 And on my lips in silence
 Her words are taught but mumbled o'er
 And air and words are free
 Within the youth in charmed hall
 Some words were taught and true
 Meaning the beauty's borrowed air
 Or are to give the love?
 —The Rayburn's Silence in his Page.

Now it happened that at Bellevue, the young woman whom we—with the sweet familiarity of art—have had the joy to know as Elizabeth, moved about in unconsciousness, mostly blindfold, of the amputation of Eugene Bramfield. The media might take to Mrs. Higgs at Hawthorne vague letters from Judge Hodgson hinting at clues and traces of Florian, preparatory to the restoration of the lost brother; but Bramfield, never anything but a wealth from the mysterious career of the subconsciousness, was non-existent forevermore, except through the magic of *Le Claire*. But Elizabeth Waldron, just home from college, full of the wise un wisdom of Smith and twenty-three, and palpitating with the shock which had broken the eddies by which she had so long, long ago reigned herself in the safe and deep waters of the harbor of a literary and intellectual edifiacy, still dreamed of the lovable personality which had vanished, although at times waves of sadness swept across her beam.

For one thing, that spirit of hers, made for his reading on the train—how could she have written it! Elizabeth's cheeks burned when she remembered it. Then she thought of the weeks of chaste dalliance between her acceptance of him and his departure, and of the clam with which he had entered that safe harbor of hers, and swept her from those moorings; and the letter seemed but a little return for the rites of adoration he had performed before her.

But (and now the cheeks burned once more) why, why had he not written to her as soon as he reached New York? Was he one with whom it was, out of sight, out of mind? Or was he one of those business men who cannot place anything more delicate than price-

quotations on paper? Or—and here the cheeks paled—was he suddenly ill? She wished, after all, that she had not written it!

And one day, when a special-delivery letter came and surprised her, the run out in the winter sun to the summer-house where she had sat so much with him, and read it in quiet. Whereupon the unrest increased, because the letter seemed an undise Eugene as if he had copied it from some Complete Letter Writer.

Florian had agonized over this letter—had even tried the experiment of writing one while in the "Chambre Blanche" under the influence of Miss. in Gales; but it was too incoherent for any use—and had done the best he could. Professor Hetherwick and Judge Hodgson were working out a code of behavior for Mr. Amidon when he should return to Bellevue. They kept him in the Bramfield personality for hours every day; but such a matter as this letter to Elizabeth, he could not entrust to them. Every day, though, he looked into the varicolored eyes of Clara and willed to sleep, and every day the operation grew less and less painful to him.

Fast and complex was the system of notes built up by the professor and the judge. They told him all about his various properties and holdings of stock; they listed the clubs and social organizations to which he belonged, and the offices he held in each. They made a directory of names mentioned by him in his abnormal state, and compiled facts about each person. It must have been very much like the copious information that we think we have about historical characters—elaborate, and the best thing possible in the absence of the real facts; but only the reflection of these people in the mind of some one else, afterward. Finally the judge brought the whole to his friend, neatly typewritten, paragraphs numbered, facts tabulated, and all provided with a splendid index and system of cross-references.

"Is this the guide by which I am to regulate my conduct in Bellevue?" asked he, after looking it over.

"Well," said the judge, "it may not



Drawn by Grace Carroll
"I'm not here to be jumped on, am I?"

be quite like remembering all about things; but anyhow it will help some, won't it?"

"I suppose I'm to carry it with me and when an acquaintance accosts me on the street, I'm to look him up in the index and find out who he is, before I decide whether to shake hands with him or not him, am I?"

"Not exactly that way," said the judge; "that wouldn't be practical, you know, but it's ten to one you'll find his name there. I tell you, that occupation——"

"To tiddle into galleries," broke in the protestor, "according to its tri-angles of lookish was to thutcher's tin. A wonderfully tediousness him. It will amble you——"

"Has it any plan of reference," interrupted Amickon, "by which I shall be enabled to find out about a man when I don't know who he is?"

"N—no."

"Or, in such a case, to give me knowledge of my past relations with him, or whether I like him or hate him?"

"Of course," said the judge, "we only try to do the possible. The law requires no more to do more."

"Does this thing," said Amickon, shaking it in evident disgust, "tell where I

live in Bellevue, whether in lodgings or at a hotel, or in my own house? Could I take it and find my home?"

"Dunno it, Florian," said the judge. "I'm not here to be jumped on, am I? No one can remember everything all the time. We'll get those things and put them into a supplement, you know."

"Not for me," said Florian. "I've made up my mind definitely about this. I'll not depend upon it. If I go back to Bellevue, I must have at hand at all times the means of connecting things as I find them with the life of this Brausefeld. I must take with me the bridge which spans the chasm between Brausefeld and Amickon—I mean our friend Clara. Without her, I shall never go back. I haven't the nerve. I should soon find myself in a tangle of mistakes from which I could never extricate myself—I've thought it all out. The Great Labyrinth would be like going home from school, in confusion."

"Pshaw!" said the judge, looking lovingly at Bridget's Note on the Compiled Statements of Brausefeld, "you could find your way along very well—with these."

"Would you go into the trial of a case," said Florian, "no matter how simple, in which not only your own future, but the

happiness of others, might be involved, without even a speaking acquaintance with any of the parties, or one of the witnesses? I tell you, Judge, we must have *Mme. Le Claire*."

The judge rolled up the notes and snapped a rubber band about the roll. He said no more until evening.

"Then," said he, as if he had only just made up his mind to concede the point, "let's see if it can be arranged at once. Come over to the Hathaways' with me."

"I think," said Amidon, slowly, "that I'll see her alone."

"Always, yes—yes!" said the judge, changing an *interjection* into an *adverb*. "By all means, by all means. Only don't you think there may be things down there needing attention, Florian—money matters—and—and other things, you know, my boy—and that we ought to be moving in the matter? I would respectfully urge," he concluded, using his orator's chest-tones to drown Amidon's protest against his joking, "that no time be lost in deciding upon our course."

The judge had noted the increasing dependence of his client upon the fair hypnotist, and the growing interest that she seemed to feel in him, and therefore stored some notions toward the proposed to take her to Bellevue. The eyes turned to the perusal of daily commentaries and reports were still sharp enough to see the mutual tenderness exchanged in the unwavering, eye-to-eye encounter whereby Amidon was converted into Bramfield, and to note the softness of the delicate stroke by which Florian's monopoly was induced or dissipated. He rather favored dropping the Hathaway acquaintance: but he could not answer Amidon's arguments as to their need for it.

So it was that, about the time when Elizabeth Waldron sat in the summer-house at Bellevue, with tears of disappointment in her pretty eyes, holding poor Florian's heart—he could do but ineffective better all crumpled up in her hand, the figure *Le Claire* rested her elbow upon a window-sledge in the attitude of going into the street (it was all outside, for she saw nothing), and

was disturbed by Aurora, who brought in Mr. Florian Amidon's card. She gave a few pokes to her hair, of course, turned once or twice about before her mirror, and went into the parlor.

"The judge and your father," said Amidon, "have got up a wonderful guide from notes of this man Bramfield's talk."

"Yes," said she, with a smile; "they are wonderful."

"And perfectly useless," he continued, "so far as my meeting by them in Bellevue is concerned."

"As useless," she admitted, "as can be."

"You know that?" he inquired. "Then why did you let them go on with it?"

"That's good," said she. "I like that! I was nearly started to mention it, wasn't I?"

"The fact is, Clara," said he, "as you can see, that I've got to have you at Bellevue. I shall not go down there without you. I can't do it. I've thought it all out——"

"So have I," said she. "I know that you'd have to have me—for a little while; know it all the time. I was just thinking about it as you came up."

"Then can you—will you go?"

"Can I stay, Florian?" she inquired, steadily. "Can I leave you this just-cured blind and deaf man, and my work for you only begun? I must go! I was just thinking of that as you came up. We were just talking about our going to Bellevue, as you came in, papa. Mr. Amidon will need us for a while when he first gets there."

"Certainly, surely," said the professor. "The most interesting phases of the case will arise in Bellevue. I guess to little-lets of keeping you under my supervision until—until to last dog to bark! Let us despatch Charlotte Blocher to spy out to lands. In a day or two he can thence were his man Bramfield like, were to fair trouble Elizabeth sister, and characterally get on to be legal observation. He will meet up with us at to train, and see that we don't put our foot in it. We will see he asked to mortification of having Alderman Bramfield, chairman of the street committee, asking to be foreman to say to his

lashings; or to thank of Miss Vanderling boasting her on to street wit a cold, cold stare of unrecognition. Good! Let to shake like his tobacco forthwith. Clara and I will be charmed and happy, my friend, to accompany you. Implacably considered, it will be great stuff!"

IX

IN BARRETT HOSPITALITY

The good that gave hands, left and right,
To deal with dress and in light,
Laid upon the pure all signs to both,
Laid lines for paths manifold:
One temple to taste both near and sweet,
One gate for cold, hot and meet;
But, Christian Sir, where's their art,
Trust not thy many-membered heart!
One not one heart to handle, and yet
Handle a room for the Reverend
Whoever gave such vision part.
The devil planned and built the heart!
—to a Noble Looker

Clara, Amidon and Blatherwick were on their way to Belleville. The professor was in the smoking-car, his daughter and Florian in the parlor-car. Amidon, his nerves strained to the point of agony, sat dreading the end of the journey, as one falling from an air-ship might shrink from the termination of his. Miss. is Claire brooded over him morosely.

"Of course," said Amidon, "this Brausefield must have adopted some course of behavior toward Miss Waldron, when——"

"You must call her Elizabeth," said Miss. is Claire, "and——"

"And what?" he inquired, as she failed to break the pause. "Have you heard out——much——about it——from him?"

"Not so very much," she replied, "only she'd expect such things as 'dear-est' and 'darling' at times. And occasionally 'pet' and 'sweetheart'—and 'dearie.' I can't give them all; you must anticipate a little, can't you?"

"Merciful heaven!" groaned Amidon; "I can't do it!"

"You have," said Miss. is Claire; "and more—a good deal more."

"It was that scandalous Brausefield," said he, in perfect seriousness. "More?" What do you mean by 'more'?"

"Well, sometimes, you——"

"He, not I?"

"Yes, I think we had better say—sometimes, when you were alone, your arm went about her waist; her head was drawn down upon your bosom; and with your hand, you turned her face to yours, and——"

"Clara, stop!" Amidon's bashful feeling was wrong to the sweating-point as he uttered the cry. "I never could have done it! And do you mean to say I must now set up to a record of that kind—and with a strange lady? She—the won't permit it—— Oh, you must be mistaken! How do you know this?"

Miss. is Claire blushed, and seemed to wait words for a reply. Amidon repeated the question.

"I want to know if you are sure," said he. "To make a mistake in that direction would be worse than the other, you know."

"Ah, would it?" said Clara; "I didn't know that!"

"Oh! I think we may take that for granted."

"You really don't get a grain of good from your Brausefield experience," said she, "or you'd know better."

"But, as to the fact," urged Amidon, "how can you guess out any such state of things as you describe?"

"Can't you guess a little bit more once in a while? I know about it, from Mr. Brausefield's treatment—of—of me—when I made him think—that I—was Elizabeth! Oh, don't you see that I had to do it, so says know, and tell you? Oh! I wish I had never, never begun this! I do, I do!"

A parlor-car has no conveniences whatever for hiccups, hysterics or weeping, so miserably are our American railways managed; and Clara winked back into her eyes the tears which filled them, and Amidon looked at her tenderly.

"Did I, really," said, he confusedly—"so you?"

"M'm," said Miss. is Claire, nodding affirmatively; "I couldn't stop you?"

"It must have been dreadful—for you?" said Amidon.

"Awful," said she; "but the work had to be done, you know."

"Oh, if it were you, now," said he,

laying his hand on him, "I could do it, if you didn't mind. I—I should like to, you know."

"Now see here," said Clara: "if you're just practicing this, as a sort of rehearsal, you must go further and faster than a public place like this allows, or you'll soon cold by comparison with what has passed. If you mean what you say, let me remind you that you're engaged?"

Mr. Amidon wavered softly, but sincerely. Somehow, the pitiful case of the girl who had written that letter with which he had fallen in love, had less and less of appeal to him as the days drifted by. And now, while the duty of which he had assured himself still impelled him to her side, he confessed that this other girl with the variegated hair and eyes, and the power to amaze and restore him, the conflict with the thrilling gaze and the strong, supple figure, was calling more and more to the aboriginal man within him. So, while he took Elizabeth's letters from his pocket and read them, to get, if possible, some new light upon her character, it was Clara's face that his eyes sought, as he glanced over the top of the sheet. Ah, Florian, with one girl's love-letter in your hands, and the face of another clasped in that avel gaze, can you be the bashful banker-bachelor who could not discuss the new style of ladies' figures with Mrs. Hunter! And as we thus moralize, the train sweeps on and on, and into Bellevue, where Judge Blodgett waits upon the platform for our arrival.

The judge stood by the steps to assist upon Amidon as he alighted. That gentleman and Miss. la Claire, however, pervertedly got off at the other end of the car. As they walked down the platform, Florian met his first test, in the salutation of a young lady in a tailor-made gown, who nodded and smiled to him from a smart trap at a short distance from the station, where she seemed to be waiting for some one.

"Any baggage, Mr. Broadfield?" said a drayman.

"Yes," said Amidon; "take the checks."

"Do these go to the hotel, or——"

The man waited for directions.

"I don't—that is," said the poor fellow, "I really—— Just wait a minute! Judge," this in a whisper to his friend, who had reached his side, "this is terrible! Where do I want to go?—and for the love of heaven, where does this bound take my baggage?"

"Your lodgings at the Bellevue House?" returned the judge.

"To my lodgings at the Bellevue House," announced Amidon.

"And, say," said the judge, "don't look that way; but the young woman in the one-horse trap across the way is your intended."

"No!" said Amidon. "I lifted my hat to her—she nodded to me, you know."

"The devil!" said the judge; "I'll bet you didn't put any more warmth than a steam into your meaning. Well, you'll have to go over, and she'll take you up-stairs, I suppose. Don't stay with her long, if you can help it, and come to me at the hotel as soon as you can. She's been driving over to see who got off every New York train ever since I came. Go to her, and may the Lord be merciful to you! Here are three notes, if you think they'll help you any—I've added some to 'em since I got down here."

Amidon waved a contemptuous rejection of the notes, and, casting a despairing glance at Miss. la Claire, walked over toward his fate. He could have saved the lot of the bull-fighter advancing into the fearful radius of action of a pair of gray horns. He would gladly have changed places with the gladiator who hears the grashing of hoofs with behind the slowly opening cage doors. To have walked up to the mouth of a battery of hostile Outings would have seemed easy, as compared with this present act of his. Which was nothing more than stepping to the side of a carriage in which sat a girl, for a place near whom any unattached young man in Bellevue would have placed his eternal welfare as jeopordy.



THE OCCULTATION OF FLORIAN AMIDON

By HERBERT QUICK

SYNOPSIS.—The opening incidents relate how Florian Amidon, banker in a small Western city, starts on a short journey in June, 1896, leaves the train at a junction and having nothing more said he awakes in a sleeping-car approaching New York city, in February, 1901. He discovers that he has the clothes and other effects of a Eugene Bramfield, old dealer, of Bellevue, Pennsylvania. To add to the dilemma, in Amidon's pocket are two letters signed "Elizabeth Waldron." In New York a part of "mischance," Miss Clara is Clara and her father, Professor Waldron, meets Amidon in the Bramfield countenance and had not much about the old man. Amidon meets an old friend, Judge Blodgett, who goes to Bellevue to make further investigations and meets Max Waldron. He speaks for the others, and Amidon finds that Elizabeth is at Bellevue.

IX.—Continued

Point by point, the girl's outward seeming met Amidon's eyes as he stared her. From the platform, it was an impressionistic view of a well-lit trap and horse, and a young lady wearing a picture-hat with a sweeping plume, habited in a gown of modish tailoring, and holding the reins in well-gauntleted hands. As he reached the middle of the street-crossing, the face, surrounded by dark hair, began to

show its subtle features of great dark eyes, strongly marked brows, and a strong, sweet mouth with vivid lips. Then came the impression of a form held erect, and with the strong shoulders and arms which came from education, and the roundness which denotes that expert control, the well-developed woman. But it was only as he stood by the side of the carriage that he saw and felt the mingled dignity and frankness, the sureness and lightness of touch, with which she acted or refrained from acting; the

lack of haste, the temperateness of gesture and intonation, which bespoke in a moment that type of woman which is society's finished product.

Her lips were parted in a half-smile; the great dark eyes sought his in the smiling glance which seeks no companionship and in the face and voice there was something transitory, vibrant and pleadingly anxious. Yet she did and said only commonplace. She gave him her hand, and threw over the lap robe an invitation for him to take the seat beside her.

"I am glad to see you back, dear," said she, "and a little surprised."

"I hardly expected to come on this train," he answered, "until the very hour of starting. I can—hardly say—how glad I am—to be here."

She was silent, as she drove among the drays and carriages, out into the open street. He looked searchingly, although furtively, at her, and blinked as if he had been detected in staring at a lady in the street as she suddenly looked him straight in the face.

"Have you been ill, Eugene?" said she. "You look so worn and tired."

"I have had a very hard time of it since I left," said he; "and have been far from well."

She patted him lightly with her glove.

"You must be careful of yourself," said she, and paused as if to let him supply her reasons for so saying. "I hope your trouble is over, dear."

"Thank you," said he. "I am sure that after a few hours in my room, I shall be quite refreshed. Will you please put me down at the Bellevue House? I shall beg the privilege of calling soon."

"Why?" She looked swiftly at him, looked at the horse, and again at him. "Soon?" she went on, as if astonished. "I shall be alone this evening—if you care about it!"

"Oh, yes!" said he, confusedly, "this evening, yes! I meant sooner—in a few minutes, you know?"

"No," said she, in that tone which wardly denotes the raising of the drawbridge of propriety; "you must rest until this evening. Who is the old gentleman who has been waiting two or three days to see you?"

"Judge Hodggett, an old friend," said he, relieved to find some matter with reference to which he could tell the truth.

"And the queer-looking lady—do you know her?"

"Oh, yes!" said Arnden; "she is a good friend, too."

"Ah?" she girl answered, in a tone which said almost anything, but was not by any means without significance. "And who is she?"

"Her professional name is Mrs. de Claine; in private life, she is Miss Waldron."

"I didn't see the rest of the troupe," said Miss Waldron, truly; "or perhaps she's an electrician."

"No," said Arnden, "she's an occultist—a sort of—well, a hypnotist."

There was a long pause here, during which they drove near to the big brick building on the side of which Arnden saw the sign of the Bellevue House.

"Also an old friend?" inquired Miss Waldron.

"Oh, no!" said Florian; "I met her only a week or two ago."

"She must be very charming," said Elizabeth, "to have inspired so much friendship in so short a time. How we are at the hotel. Do you really think you'll call this evening? An reveal, then."

Even she unphilosophical Arnden could perceive, now, that the drawbridge was up, the portcullis down, and all the bars and shutters of the castle in place. Moreover, in the outer darkness in which he moved, he imagined there roamed lions and wolves and screaming devils—and he with his guide but Judge Hodggett, who stands there in the lobby, so widely beckoning to him.

X

THE WAGON MOVED

When Adam stepped
In Eden's tower,
One little maid
Accused his love,
He fell her friend,
I leave to you
Where he'd have dropped
Had there been two!
—Parson Redburnham.

"Now, Florian," said Judge Hodggett, as they sat in Arnden's room, "search

perused, and see if you don't feel a dreamy sense of familiarity here in these rooms—the feeling that the long-lost heir has when he crawls down the chimney as a sweep and finds himself in his ancestral halls, you know."

"Never saw a thing here before," said Amidon, "and have no feeling except surprise at the elegance about you, and a smacking fear that Rowenfeld may come in at any time and eject us. The fellow had taste, anyhow!"

The sounds made by a great master playing his heart out in the lowest notes of the flute; but it is so far from being familiar to me that I'm quite sure I never heard a voice like it before."

The judge strode up and down the room perturbedly.

"Why," said he, "it's enough to make a man's hair stand?"

"It does," said Amidon. "What can I say to her?"

"You haven't a piece of property



Illustration by Herbert Quote

"'Never saw a thing here before,' said Amidon."

"Didn't you recognize anything," went on the judge, "in the streets or buildings or the general landscape?"

"Nothing."

"Nor in the young lady? Wasn't there a sort of—of music in her voice, like long-forgotten melodies, you understand—like what the said heir notices in after-years when his mother blunders onto him?"

"Well," said Florina, "her voice is sweetest, if that's what you mean—sweetest and low, and reminds one of

hers," said the judge, going on with the matter appressed in his mind, "that you could successfully maintain a claim for, if anybody converted it. They'd ask you on cross-examination if it was yours, and you'd have to say you didn't know! And there's a world of property, I find. They could take it all away from you without your knowing it, if they only knew. Have you any course mapped out—any plans?"

"To a certain extent, yes," said Florina.

"I shall call upon her this evening."

"For help, yes," said the judge. "She must bring Bransfield up, so that we can deal out about these property matters."

"I don't mean that," said Amidon. "I must call on Miss Waldron—Elizabeth."

"And neglect——" began the judge.

"Everything," said Florian, firmly.

"This is something that concerns my honor as a gentleman. While it remains in its present state, I can't bother with these property matters. Have I an office?"

"Have you?" said the judge. "Well, just wait until you see them."

"And an office force?"

"Confidential manager named Stevens," said Judge Redgett. "Bookkeeper, assistant bookkeeper and stenographer. Tried to pump 'em and got frozen out. Yes, you've got an office force."

"Well, then," said Amidon, "we'll go down there in the morning, and I'll tell this man Stevens—is that what you call him?—to show you all through the books and things—going to buy or take a partnership, or something. Then we can go through the business together. We can do it that way, without being suspected, can't we?"

"Maybe," meditatively, "maybe we can. Take a sort of invoice, hey? But don't you think we'd better have Bransfield on the witness-stand for a while this evening? A sort of examining—crossing—review, on the eve of trial, you know?"

"No, no?" answered Florian. "No more of that, if it can be avoided."

The judge stroked his mustache in silence for a time.

"See here," asked he, finally, "what did we bring Waldron and the professor down here for, anyway?"

"I know," said Amidon. "But, somehow, I feel like getting along without it if I can. As little of her—of their services as possible, Judge, from now on."

"Oh!" said the judge, in a tone of one who suddenly sees the situation; "all right, Florian, all right. Maybe it's best, maybe it's best. Abnormal condition, as the professor says, and all that; effect on the mind, and one thing and another. You—you—yes!"

"If I have any duties to perform here, Judge, you must help me to keep straight. I've never had any tendency to go wrong, you know, but that was for lack of temptation, don't you think, Redgett?"

"Well, well, Florian, I can't say so to that; can't say. You—uh—uh! You'll want to go over to the Waldron residence this evening. I'll take you out and show you the house. By George! It must seem extraordinarily odd to walk about among things you are supposed to know like a book, and to be, in fact, a perfect stranger. Dante could have used that idea, if it had occurred to him."

"An idea for Dante, indeed!" thought Amidon, as he walked toward the house, which, from afar, the judge had pointed out to him. "For the Inferno! a soul thrown into a realm full of its friends and enemies, its loves and hates, thorns of memory, of all sense of familiarity, of all its habits, stripped of all the protection of habitude. For the Inferno, indeed!—Now this must be the house, with the white columns running up to the top of the second story; crossing the ravine and losing sight of it for a few minutes makes even the house look different. Outside, I can get accustomed to it, in this five-minute inspection. But, inside—oh, to be Swedish while I get used to it! Well, here goes!"

"Ting-a-ling-ting-ting!" rang the bell somewhere back in the recesses of the house, and the footstep of a man approached the door. Amidon was frightened. He had expected either Elizabeth herself or a maid to take his card, and was prepared for such an encounter only. A little dark, bright-eyed man opened the door and asked his name.

"Why, Bransfield, how are you?" he exclaimed. "Heard you'd got back. Sorry I couldn't meet you in New York. Got my telegram, I suppose?"

"I just called," said Amidon, "to see Miss Waldron."

"Oh, yes!" said the little man; "nothing but her, now. But she isn't here. Hasn't been for over a week. Nobody here but me. Can't you stay awhile? Say, 'Gone, we put Walter through the lodge while you were gone, and he knows



Scene by Oliver Twist

"Only in a general way," replied Amos, wondering who and what Edgerton would talk with to-day.

he's in, all right enough. Indefatigable took that part of yours in the catacombs scene, and you ought to have heard the house of the early Christians rattle when he belated out the lecture. "Hush, among the eternal shades of the deep curves of death, walked once the great exemplars of our Ancient Order." Why, it would raise the hair on a beaute statue. And when, in the second, they condemned him to the Tarpeian Rock, and swung him off into space in the Chair of the Glorious Chaise, he howled so that the Sovereign Pontiff made 'em awe off on it, and take him out—and he could hardly stand to receive the Grand and Awful Secret. Lump as a rag?

But impressed? Well, he said it was the greatest piece of risqué work he ever saw, and he's seen most of 'em. Go to any lodges in New York?"

"No," said Amos, who had never joined a secret order in his life, "and do you think we ought to talk these things out here?"

"No, maybe not," said the Joiner; "but nobody's about, you know. Come in, can't you?"

"No, I must really go, thank you. By the way," said Florian, "where does Miss—er—I must go, at once, I think?"

"Oh, I know how it is," went on his unknown listener; "nothing but Tess, now. Might as well bid you good-by,

and give you a debit from all the clubs and lodges, until six months after the wedding. You'll be back by that time, thirty-two than even. By the way, that reminds me: the gang's going to give you a blow-out at the club. Kind of an odd language business, 'champanagne-wither an' cracked ice,' dinner at midnight, won't go home till morning, all good fellows and the rest of it. Edgington spoke to you about it, I s'pose?"

"Only in a general way," replied Amidon, wondering who and what Edgington would turn out to be. "I don't know yet how my engagements will be——"

"Oh, nothing must stand in the way of that, you know," the little man went on. "Why, God! the western feelings of brotherly—— Oh, you don't mean it! But I mustn't keep you. Needs told me that the plans for your house have come. She's got 'em over there, now. I say, old man, I envy you your evening. Like two birds arranging the nest. Sorry you can't come in: but, good night. And, say! Your little strawberry blonde is in town! Wouldn't that jar you?"

"Heavens!" ejaculated Amidon. "How am I ever to get through with this!"

The genuine agony in Florian's bones fixed the attention of the little man, and seemed to arouse some terrible suspicion.

"Why, 'Gee,' said he, "you don't mean that there's anything in this blonde matter, do you, that will—— By George! And she's a sister of one of the most prominent A. O. U. M.'s of Pittsburgh—and you remember our solemn obligation!"

"No," said Amidon, "I don't!"

"What! You don't?"

"No!" said Florian. "I've forgotten it!"

"Forgotten it?" said his questioner, receding as if in horror. "Forgotten it! And with the sister of the Past Sovereign Pontiff of Pittsburgh Lodge No. 888! I tell you, Bramfield, I don't believe it. I prefer to think you're lightheaded! Cracked! Out of your head! But, 'Gee,' added his unknown brother, in a stage-whisper, "if there has been any-

thing between you and anything comes up, you know, Jim Alford, for one, knowing and understanding your temptations—for the strawberry blonde are the very devil!—will stand by you until the first gutter six inches deep on the very hinges of—— Say, Mary's coming in at the side-door. Good night! Keep a stiff upper lip; stay by Bess, and I'll stay by you, obligation or no obligation. 'F. D. and H.' you know; death, perhaps, but no desertion! So long! See you to-morrow."

And Amidon walked from the house of his maternal aunt, knowing that his sweetheart had once seen was waiting in her unknown home for him to come to her, and had as a basis for conversation the plans for their house. He could imagine her with the blue-prints unfolded, considering them with all a woman's interest in such things, and himself discussing with her the home in which she expected him to place her as mistress. And the position she thought she held in his heart—recent, or—— He leaned against a fence, in bewilderment approaching despair. His mind dwelt with horror upon the woman whom he could think of only under the coarse appellation of the strawberry blonde. Was there a real crime here to take the place of the imagined putting away of Bramfield? Bramfield! The very name sickened him. "Strawberry blonde, indeed!" thought Florian; and "Bramfield, the perjured villain!"

In a paroxysm of dread, he started for the hotel. Then he walked down the street toward the railway station, with the thought of boarding the first train out of town. This resolve, however, he changed, and I am glad to say that it was not the thought of the fortune of which Judge Hodges had spoken that altered his resolution, but that of the letter which greeted his return to consciousness as Florian Amidon, and the image of the dark-eyed girl with a low voice and the strong figure, who had written it, and who waited for him, somewhere, with the roll of plans. So he began searching again for the house with the white columns; and found it on the next corner beyond the one he had first tried.

Elizabeth sat in a fit of depression at the strangeness of Mr. Broadfield's conduct—a depression which deepened as the evening wore on with no visit from him. She sprang to her feet and pressed both hands to her bosom, at the ring of the door-bell, ran lightly to the door and listened as the servant greeted Mr. Broadfield, and then hurried back to her seat by the grate, and became so absorbed in her book that she was oblivious of his being shown into the room, until the maid had retired, leaving him standing at gaze, his brow beaded with sweat, his face pale and his hands unsteady. The early Christmas had entered upon his martyrdom.

II

THE FIRST BATTLE AND DEFEAT

From Camber to Camberland

The war by night no longer started,
In arms and armed all weapons
The darkness rode haphazard to claim her doleful
his reward.

Down from her window look'd the maid
To see her kinswoman, half-afraid—
In him her lightning array'd!
And, unmanner'd by the hoard Love to yield,
Her woman's hand shep'd.

From Camberland to Camber

Safe Delivered and Lament—
To fight perdition, battle not!
The king she took, she sought for him, in spite
of shadow, in spite of light.

—From Camberland to Camber.

It is a disagreeable duty (one, however, which you and I, moderns, discharge with a conscientiousness which the unthinking are sometimes unable to distinguish from need) to criticize one's friends. The task is doubly hard when the unimadvised is committed to paper, with a more or less definite idea of ultimate publication. I trust, beloved, that we may call Mr. Florian *Amidst a friend*. He is an honest fellow as the world goes, in spite of the testimony of *Shannon Woodraver* regarding the steers; and he wishes to do the right thing. In a matter of business, now, or on any question of fines, plates or licenses, we should find him full of decision, just and prompt in action. But (and the disagreeable duty of censure comes in here) there he stands like a

straighten-bottle in a most object state of *wo, because, foresooth*, he possesses the love of that budding June over there by the grate, and knows not what to do with it! What if he doesn't feel as if he had the slightest personal acquaintance with her? What if the image of another, and the thought—? But look with me, for a moment, at the situation!

There she sits, so attentive to her book (is it the "*Kubaiyat*"? Yes!) that his entrance has not attracted her notice—not at all! One shapely patent-leather is stretched out to the fence, and the evening side of the gown happens to be drawn back so as to show the slender ankle, and a glimpse of black above the leather. The desire for acquaintance alone compels a reference to the fact that the boundary line of this all-sorbetted black area diverges perceptibly as they recede from the foot. It is only a detail, but even Florian notices it, and thinks about it afterward. Her face is turned toward the shadows up there by the window, her eyes looking at space, as if in quest of form and his rose, or *Janskyrd* and his *ser-ving'd* Cup, or the relation of the *Master-Knot* of *brass Fate*. The *unconscience* pose showing the incurved spine, and the arms and shoulders glimpsing through folds of lace at sleeves and *coynage*, would make the fortune of the photographer-in-ordinary to a professional beauty. And yet that man *Ardion* stands there like a green image, and fears to rush to where an angel has folded her wings for him and rests!

He knows that he is expected to claim some of the privileges of the long-absent lover. He has some information as to their nature. His eyes ought to apprise him (as they do us, my lady!) of their precariousness. He is not without knowledge concerning past conduct of that type which, beginning in head-won privilege, ripens into prisoned desire, not to discharge which is insult all the more bitter because it is not to be mentioned. It is not to be denied that the *tableau* appeals to him; and because another woman has lately touched him in a similar way, he stands there and

condemns himself for that! There is small excuse for him, I admit, sir. Her first token of his presence should have been a kiss on the snowy shoulder. You suggest the hair? Well, the hair, then, though for my part, I have always felt— But never mind! Had it been you or I in his place—

Yes, my dear, this digression is becoming tedious. Let us proceed with the story.

Kathleen rose with a little start of surprise, a little flutter of the bosom, and came forward with extended hands. He took them with a trembling grasp which might well have passed as evidence of terror.

"Ah, Eugene," said she, holding him away. "It has seemed an age!"

"Yes," said he, truthfully, "an eternity, almost."

"Sit down by the fire," said she, in that low voice which means so much. "You are cold."

"I am a little cold," he replied. "I must have remained outside too long."

"Yes—er—" she returned, and after a long pause: "It doesn't seem to take long—sometimes. And the wind is in the east."

Now, when a bride-sweet begins to deal in double meanings of this sort with her fiancé, the source of true love is likely to be entering upon a piece of rough road-bed.

"How did you find Estelle when you called?"

Estelle? Estelle? Estelle! Nothing in Kidgert and Maitherswick's notes about Estelle. The world full of useless people—a billion and a half of them—and not an Estelle at poor Arnold's call in this time of need. Hence this long hiatus in the conversation.

"Really, Miss—er—my dear, I haven't had time to call on any one."

"It will be a little hard to explain," said she, after a silence, "to my prospective bridegroom and dearest friend, that you were so long in New York and could not call. It is not quite like you, Eugene."

He was sitting where he could see her well, and because he looked into the fire a good deal, he found himself gazing

frothy ether. Her manifold perfections filled him with the same feeling of astonishment experienced by that beggar who swoon in the prince's chamber, clothed in splendor, and with a royal domain in fee.

(Personally, I regard the domain which spread itself before Arnold, as imperial.)

As the pronounced her gentle reproach, her eyes turned to his, and he started guiltily.

"No," he confessed, "it was not the right thing. You must forgive me, won't you?"

"I hope," said she, smiling. "I may be able to do more than that: maybe I shall be so fortunate as to get you Estelle's forgiveness."

"Thank you," he said; and then seeking for safer ground: "Haven't you something for us to look over—some plans or something?"

"Or something?" she repeated, with a ripple of laughter.

It was the first time he had heard this laugh; and Marot's kiss ran through his mind:

"Good God! I could make the very stones and
ways

Through which she passes, burst into a place
new!"

No spell were wanting from the dead to raise
me.

Not only that sweet laugh wherewith she dares
me!"

"Or something," she repeated, I say: "It might just as well be the problem of a new pipe-line survey, for all the interest you take in it. I oughtn't to look at them with you; but come, they're over here on the table."

Somewhat, this lady's air required the deferential offer of his arm; and somehow, the deference seemed to please her. So he felt that the tension was loosened as he turned over the blue-prints. Moreover, in matters of architecture he felt at home—if he could only steer clear of any discussion of the grounds. He had no idea of the location of these.

Soon their heads were close together over the plans. A dozen times her hair brushed his lips, two or three times his fingers touched the satin skin of her arms and shoulders, and all the time he felt

himself within the single atmosphere which enwraps so divine a maiden, so odorous breeze clothe the shores of Ceylon. Her breath, the faint sweet perfume in her hair, the soft frown-dew of her skirts, the appealing loquacity of her voice—all these wrought strongly upon Florian; and when she leaned lightly upon him as she reached past him for one of the thursts, he felt (I record it to

"I'll have the architect come and see you about these," said Arndson.

"What?" said she, in apparent astonishment—"from Boston?"

"Ah—well," he stammered, "I didn't know—that is— Yes, from Boston! We want these notices as you want them, you know, if it were from Paris or Calcutta. And I think there should be some provision for prism-glass to



Illustration by Howard Chandler Christy

"Even their heads were close together over the page."

his credit) as if he must take her to his arms, and complete the embrace she had involuntarily half begun. But the feeling that she was, after all, a strange young lady, and was revealing herself to him under a mistake as to his identity, restrained him.

There were some little improvements in the place which had occurred to Elizabeth, especially in the arrangement of kitchen, pantry and laundry.

light up the library. It could be sat in night there on that north exposure; don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes, and what an improvement it will be!" she replied. "And why I have all the editions of Browning I want, even if I couldn't explain what 'Ulrich Roland to the Dark Tower Comes' means?"

"Oh, does that point puzzle you?" exclaimed Florian, greeting the allusion to

Browning as the war-horse welcomes the battle. "Then you have never chance to run across the first edition of Child's 'Scottish Ballads.' You get the story there, of Child's Roland following up the quest for his sister, shot up by enchantment in the Dark Tower. In searching for which his brothers—Guthbert and Gile, you remember, and the rest of 'The Band'—had been lost. He must blow a certain horn before it, in a certain way—you know how it goes. 'Dauntless the dog-horn to my lips I set.' It's quite obvious when you know the story, and not a bit of an enigma. The line in 'Lear' shows that the verses must have been commonly sung in Shakespeare's time—"

The girl was looking at him with something like amusement; but her answer referred to the matter of his discourse.

"Yes," said she, "I can see now how the 'Dark Tower' lightens up. I must read it again in the light of this explanation of yours. Shall we read it together, now?"

"Oh, by all means!" said he. "Only I warn you I never tire when I find any one who will study Browning with me. I tried to read 'The King and the Book' with a dear friend once, and reading my favorite part, 'Osageppe Opossumski,' as I named my eyes after that head-breaking finale. 'O, great, just, good God! Miserable me!' I saw she was doing. Since then, I read Browning with his brow only—"

"Yes, you are right in that. But, Eugene," she exclaimed, "you said to me many times that his verse was rot, that Norton ought to have included him in his gallery of degenerates, that he is muddled, and that there isn't a line of poetry in his works so far as you have been able to dig into them. And you cited 'Child's Roland' as proof of all that! And you never would listen to any of Browning, even when we almost quarreled about it! Now, if that was because— Why it was—!"

She passed as if afraid she might say too much. Florian, who had curled in his literary enthusiasm, collapsed into his chronic state of terror. Even in so impersonal a thing as Browning, the

man who does not know what his habits are takes every step at his peril.

"Oh, that—that I said!" he stammered. "Yes—yes. Well, there are obscurities, you know. Even Mr. Harold admits that. But on the whole, don't you agree with me?"

"Quite," said she, dryly; "if I understand you."

There was an implied doubt as to her understanding of his position, and the only thing made clear was that the drawbridge was up again. So Florian began talking of the piano. He grew eloquent on ventilators, bathrooms and plumbing. He drew fine and learned distinctions between styles.

"The colonial," said he, "is not good unless indulged in in great moderation. Now, what I like about this is the way in which ultra-colonialism is held in check, and modified in the direction of the Greek ideal. Those columns, supporting the broad portico, hark back to the Parthenon, don't they? I like that taste and flavor of the classic."

She listened in much the same wondering way in which she had regarded him at the beginning of his outbreak on Browning. Was it possible that, after all, this lover of hers, whose antecedents were so little known, but whose five years of successful life in Delaware had won for him that confidence of his townsmen in which she had partaken, was possessed of those tastes in art and literature, the absence of which had been the one thing lacking in his character, as it appeared to her? It would seem so. And yet, why had he concealed these things from her, who so passionately longed for intellectual companionship? Somehow, resentment crept into her heart as she looked at him, and there was something in his attitude which was not frank and bold, as she liked to see a man—but this would not do. He was so lovely in his provision for the future, and surely his conversation disclosed that he had those tastes and that knowledge!

"I think the moon must be letting me look at its other side to-night," said she. "Have you been saving up the artist and poet in you, to show me now?"

"Oh, no," said he, "not at all—why,

any one knows these little things. Now let's go through the arrangements of the chambers; shall we?"

"Not to-night, if you please. Let us sit by the fire again. It will be a grand home, dear. Sometimes I think, too grand for Bellevue; and quite often I feel, too grand, too elegant—for me."

"Who then," answered Florian, who saw his conversational duty, "a dead-sure thing, and went for it there and then"—"who then could have such a home, or ought to have it, if not you?"

The girl looked questioningly, pathetically at him, as if she missed something of the convincing in his words.

"To deny that you feel so—felt so about it when you gave orders for the building, would be foolish," said the artist. "And it was very dear of you to do it. But once a man, having a little gem which he thought of perfect water, placed it in a setting so large and so sumptuously wrought that no people ever saw the little stone, unless it was pointed out to them."

"He saw it," said Florian, "whenever he wanted to—and no setting can be too beautiful for a precious stone."

He felt that he was rallying subtly.

"Really," he thought, "I am getting quite acid. And under different circumstances, I could be so in the sincerest good faith; for I know that's as good and true as she is quietly and beautiful. But after all, it is duty, only, and——"

"In such a home," she went on, "people may live a little closer than acquaintances, or not quite so close, as the case might be, with their lives diluted by their many possessions."

"Yes?" said he, expectantly.

"Before it comes to that," she burst forth, her eyes wide and her hands clasped in her lap, "I want to die! I would gather the tapers for the fire, and riddle down by it in a heap of straw by the roadside, with the man I love; and if I know he loved me, he might beat me, and I would bear it, and be happy in his strength—for happier than in those chambers you spoke of a moment ago, with an acquaintance who merely happened to be called a husband! I would rather walk the streets than that!"

Now, a lovers' quarrel requires lovers on both sides. Had Andron really been one, this crisis would have passed naturally on to protestation, counter-protestation, tears, kisses, embraces, reconciliation. But all these things take place through the interplay of instincts none of which was awakened in Florian. So he sat fortorily, and said nothing.

"I am going to let you go home, now," said the, rising. "I gave out the date of the wedding, as you requested, the day after you went away. If it were not for that, I should ask you to wait awhile—until the house is finished—or even longer. As it is, you mustn't be surprised if I say something surprising to you soon."

"E—I assure you——" began Andron. "—Good night, my——"

He had schooled himself for this farewell, and remembering what Miss de Chaire had told him, had decided upon a course of action. The two had walked out into the hall and he had put on his top-coat. Now he went bravely up to her and stooped to kiss her.

She raised her face to his, and again the feeling that this man was only a mere acquaintance passed into her being, as she looked into his eyes. She turned her lips away. But Florian, as the feeling of strangeness impressed her, lost it himself in the contemplation, brief but irresistible, of the upturned lips with their momentary invitation as soon withdrawn. The primal man in him awoke. His arm tightened about the limon waist; the divine form in the creamy silk, upon which he had only now almost dared to look, he drew to him as tightly as almost to crush her; and with one palm he raised the averted face to his, and made delicate conquest of the lips of vivid red. Once, twice, three times—and then she put her hands against his shoulders and pushed him away. Her face flamed.

"Eugene!" she exclaimed, "how——"

"Good night!" he answered, "my dearest. My darling, good night!"

And he ran down to the street, in such a conflict of emotions that he hardly knew whither he went.



THE OCCULTATION OF FLORIAN AMIDON

By HERBERT QUICK

SYNOPSIS—The sporting instincts which bore Florian Amidon, hunter in a small Western city, starts in a bluff January in June, 1896, leave the trail at a junction and know nothing more until he awakes on a sleeping-car approaching New York city, in February, 1901. He discovers that he has the clothes and other effects of a Eugene Brandfield, oil-dealer, of Bellevue, Pennsylvania. To add to the dilemma, on Amidon's person are love-letters signed "Elizabeth Waldron." In New York two "scoundrels," Miss Clara is Clara and her father, Professor Waldron, restore Amidon to the Brandfield consciousness and find out much about the oil-man. Amidon meets an old friend, Judge Hodgey, who goes to Bellevue to make further investigations. Amidon follows, accompanied by the "scoundrels," and meets Elizabeth, to whom it appears Brandfield was engaged, at the station. The meeting is an awkward one for Amidon, but steering with her success clear of topics about which he knows nothing, he makes an appointment to call at her home in the evening. After an interview full of surprises, in which they discuss plans which had already been drawn up for their future home, Amidon leaves Elizabeth good night, and departs as a member of amnesia. Meanwhile Amidon discovers that Brandfield has not been going steadily homeward toward Elizabeth.

XII

ON THE FIRM GROUNDS OF WONDER

O merry it was in the gay procession when the golden and silver tapers flew

When the torques burned the shadowed track, and the draped death in the tree,

But neither far in the twilight nor as it rode the white from the void.

And the din of the hammer and the cartilage' clattered as they beat, the great lifeblood

O a secret state for people's distress

In a breath of the air of the world of to-morrow
—Idyll of a Day-Dragon

IT is recorded in the last chapter that Mr. Amidon ran from Miss Waldron's presence in such a state of agitation that he hardly knew whether he went. To the reader who wonders why he was agitated, I have only to hint that he was wonderfully inexperienced. And as it was, he soon got his bearings and walked bravely toward his hotel; still, however, in a state of mind entirely new to him.

Gradually he lessened his gait, absorbed in mental reconstruction of his parting with Elizabeth. The pet look which, while affectionately licking the hand which caresses it, brings the blood, and at the taste reverts instantly to the normal savagery, is acted upon by impulses much like those of Amidon. His thoughts were consciousness of moving pictures of the splendid girl whom he had held in his arms and kissed. He saw her sitting by the fire as he entered. His mind's eye dwelt upon the image of the strong, full figure and the lovely head and wondrous eyes. He felt her lean against him as they stood by the table, and his arms fairly ached with the thrill of that parting embrace. His lips thickened still with the half-revived kisses, and he stopped with an insane impulse to return to repeat the tender robbery. Then, wondering at the turbulence of his own thoughts, he walked on.

During this pause, he was dimly conscious that a person whom he had seen approaching had neared to the point of meeting, and after a moment's halt, had passed on. As he resumed his walk, he heard rapid steps behind him, and was passed by a man who strongly resembled the passenger whom he had just met. This figure turned a corner a few rods in advance of Florian, and almost immediately reappeared; having turned, apparently, for the purpose of encountering Amidon once more. This time, he walked up, and halted facing Amidon.

"You'll be at the office in the morning, I suppose, Mr. Brausefeld?" said the man.

"At the office——" said Amidon. "My office? Yes."

"Well," this new acquaintance proceeded, "you'd better come prepared to fill my place in the establishment as soon as possible."

This statement was followed by a pause of the sort usually adopted for the purpose of noting the effect of some startling utterance. Amidon was feeling in his pocket for Elizabeth's first-found letter, and the affairs of the Brausefeld Oil Company had little interest for him. Yet he dimly realized that some one was relaying something.

"Let me see," said he, meaningly: "what—what do you do?"

The man gave a sort of hop, of the kind we have been taught to expect of the stag when the bullet strikes him.

"Do?" he sneered. "What do I do! What do I do? Do you mean to—— I'll tell what I do. I get together options for you and send you cipher telegrams about 'em, and don't get any answers! I attend stockholders' meetings and get whiskered by minorities because you are dead to the world off there in New York, or the Lord knows where, and don't furnish me with possum! I stay here and try to protect your interests when you desert 'em, and you send some white-headed old reproach of a Fisherton man to shadow me for a week and try to pry into my work! And when you get home you never show up at the counting-room, though you know what a pickle things are in; and when I meet you on the street, I get cut dead! That's what I do! And I stand it, do I? Ha, ha, ha! Not if J. B. Stevens knows himself. I don't! Good night, Mr. Brausefeld. Come round in the morning, and I'll show you what I do!"

After the speaker had rushed away, which he incessantly did following this outbreak, Amidon's mind reverted to Elizabeth; and not until he had reached his room did his thoughts return to his encounter in the street; and then it was only to wonder if this man Stevens was really of any importance, and if a breach with him was a matter of any consequence.

His mind soon drifted off from this, however, and he got out of bed to turn on the lights and read the above-mentioned letter. And as he read it, he grew ashamed. That unknown, those kisses, now seemed an outrage to him. Was this his return for the sweet confidences, the revelations of hidden things, with which she had honored him? "You must forget this," she had written, "only at such times of tenderness when you are gone, as you will sometimes have," and: "When you see me again, . . . without a word or look from me, know me, even more than you ever do, yours." And after this, he had permitted her

affirmation to fly to his brain, and had given her reason to think that because she had lowered her guard, he had struck her a dastard's blow. His eyes grew soft with pity, and they moistened, as he repeated to himself, "Poor little girl! poor little girl!"

Oh, yes! doubtless it was silly of him; but please to remember that he was quite as far from being blind as—we used to be; and that he was just now becoming really in love with Elizabeth. And love is much nearer him to pity than pity is to love. So he lay there and pitied Elizabeth, and wondered when the wedding was to be. He must have Clara find this out from Bramfield. And he thought regretfully of Miss de Claive. His reflections thus touched upon the two most unhappy women in Bellevue.

To the hypocrite he had become as much more than a "case," namely, that a revelation of feeling was setting on against bringing him here to be turned over to a woman for whom he cared nothing. It was a shame, she thought. It was something which no one had a right to expect of any girl.

And Elizabeth Watkins still sat by the dying fire, her heart full of a fighting which would not let her sleep. She felt humiliated and insulted, and her face burned as did her heart. But all the time she felt angry with herself for her inconsistency. She had longed for Eugenie's letters, and when they came, so few and cold, she was grieved. She had expected a dozen little carresses, even before he left her carriage; and she was saddened because she missed them. She had thought of his coming in upon her in a manner quite different from that in which he had actually swept into her presence—and when he had only pressed her hands, she had felt defrauded and robbed. And when at parting he had done (somewhat forcibly, it is true) what she had many times allowed, and what she had all the time wanted of him, she felt outraged and offended!

These thoughts kept her long by the fire, and accompanied her to her chamber, "Elizabeth Watkins," said she to her mirror, "you are going insane! Aren't you ashamed that now, when he has

shown his love and understanding of the things you love and try to understand, and surprised you by the possession of the very qualities you have felt sorely regretful on account of his not having—that you felt—that way? What asks you, that you begin to feel toward the dearest man in all the world as if he were a stranger?—Ah, but you do, you do! And yet'll never be happy with him, not ever make him happy.—And, oh, that letter, that letter! That awful letter for him to read on the case! If I had never written that!"

"What's my manager's name—Stevens?" asked Mr. Andison of Judge Blodgett. "Yes? Well, I'm going to have trouble with him! I won't be bullied by my clerk. And who is the next man?"

"Alderson," said the judge. "It's all in the notes, you know."

"And very convenient, too," said Andison. "And who is the stenographer?"

"Miss Strong," answered the judge.

"Well, let's go down—or perhaps I had better go alone. Please come in as soon as you can, won't you?"

The judge noted for the first time the decision of returning confidence in Andison's manner. Two things contributed to this: the first was the sense of something tangible and intelligible in the going down to business in the morning like an ordinary American; and the other was rising eager at the attack made upon him by this man Stevens in the street last night. What sort of discipline can there be in the business, thought he, when an employee dares use such language toward his employer? A good towering passion is a great steadier of the nerves, sometimes. He walked into the counting-room, saw his name and the word "Private" on the glass of a certain door, went boldly beyond it, and was followed by a young woman with a note-book and pencil. Presently, in came Mr. Stevens without knocking.

"Here's another pretty how-de-do!" he exclaimed, without any greeting except an angry snort. "You promised

to sign that contract for the output of the Bana's Ferry mills while you were in New York, and didn't! The papers are back with a notice that the deal is off except at a lower price. How'm I to make anything of this business, I'd like to know, if you——"

Amidon was surprised that Stevens was ignoring his threat to resign; but he was firm in his resolution to enforce discipline. The fact that he himself had been so long in a state of fear and under control, made the luxury of assuming the attitude of command an irresistible temptation.

"Mr. Stevens," said he, sternly, "have the kindness to read what is pointed on that document."

Though he had no need, Mr. Stevens gazed at attachment at the word "Private."

"Kindly ask Mr. Alderson to step here a moment," went on Mr. Amidon.

Stevens stood mute, but Alderson coughed and came.

"You may draw Mr. Stevens a salary check to date, and a month in advance, in lieu of notice," said Mr. Amidon. "Mr. Stevens, you are no longer in the employ of this concern. Mr. Alderson, you may take charge until a successor to Mr. Stevens is found. I should now regard it as a favor if I might have my private office to myself and my stenographer?"

Alderson took the paralyzed Stevens by the shoulders and walked him out into the main office. Amidon's spirit rose, as he waited for the check to come in for his signature. He stabbed his letters with the paper-knife, and felt in a blissful state of general insurrection. The subjection of the past fortnight seemed to have fallen from him. After he had signed the check, he turned to Miss Strong.

"If you please," said he, in a voice of tense stentorianity. "I will give you a few letters."

The stenographer, who seemed to regard the events of the past few minutes as nothing short of a cataclysm, flusteringly looked over her book, and just as Amidon began wondering what he could think of to put in a letter, she

burst into tears. Amidon closed his desk with a bang, and giving Alderson orders covering his absence, walked out into the streets full of the joy of gratified destructiveness. He met Alwood, and temporarily agreed to go with him to the lodge that evening. He finally found Hodgert, and informed him of what had been the result of his first morning in the office.

"Well, it's your business, Florian," said he, "but you'll need somebody who knows something about your affairs. And if you go on attending lodge-meetings where you don't know the passwords, and coming into houses where you don't intend to go, and discharging all the trusted men in your employ, you'll soon have more things to attend to than a couple of numerators and an elderly lawyer can take care of! But it's your affair; I've known you too long to try to warn you when you get one of your tantrums on. The smash-up ought to be worth seeing, anyhow!"

XIII

THE MARTYRDOM OF MR. STEVENS.

Flame.	To all others, it is death to me.
Is one that by many's common breath	
Might be expell'd?	
Colours.	War, Peace, Power, Poverty!
The Brotherhood's banner underneath	
Is touch'd thereby. We build our labyrinth	
Of secret words and potent spells, and all	
The deep-observed haunts of our craft—	
Its entrance hush'd about with deathful veils,	
And every step to thrilling is made hush'd	
By dripping terror and out-crawling awe	
Shall it be said that even Lucifer	
May break our faith and live? Never say it!	
— <i>Times of Colours</i>	

The Bellevue lodge of the Ancient Order of Christian Martyrs held its meetings on the upper story of a tall building. Mr. Alwood called for Amidon at eight, and took him up, all his boldness in the world of business replaced by weakness in the atmosphere of mystery. As he and his companion went into an anteroom and were given broad collars from which were suspended metal badges called "jewels," he felt a good deal like a spy. They walked into the lodge-room where twenty-two or thirty men with similar "jewels" sat smoking and

chatting. All seemed to know him, but (much to his relief) before he could be included in the conversation, the gavel fell, certain ones with more elaborate "jewels" and more ornate collars than the rest took higher-backed and more highly upholstered chairs at the four sides of the room, another stood at the door; and still another, in complete uniform, with sword and belt, began hustling the members to seats.

"The Deacon Mithari," said the

Amidon started, and looked about for aid or avenue of escape. Seeing none, he warily watched the Deacon Mithari. That officer, walking in the military fashion which, as patriotic literature teaches, was adopted by the early Christians, and turning square corners as was the habit of St. Paul and the Apostles, received whispered passwords from the two or three strangers, and, with a military salute, announced that all present had been put to the test and



Drawn by Hugo Jaeger

"An assemblage of warriors and such light and noisy soldiers"

wielder of the gavel, "will report if all present are known and tested members of our Dread and Mystic Councils."

"All, Most Sovereign Pontiff," responded the Deacon Mithari, who proved to be the man in the uniform, "have certain strangers who appear within the confines of our sacred hallies."

"Let them be tested," commanded the Sovereign Pontiff, "and, if brethren, welcomed; if spies, executed!"

welcomed. Then, for the first time remembering that he was not among the strangers, so far as known to the lodge, Amidon breathed freely, and rather regretted the absence of executions.

"Bring forth the Mystic Symbols of the Order!" was the next command. The Mystic Symbols were placed on a stand in the middle of the room, and turned out to be a gift box about the size of a four-pound box, a lot of human bones, and a roll-up scroll said to

contains the Gospels. The fish, as explained by the Deacon Milburn, typified a great many things connected with early Christianity, and served always to remind us of the password of the order. The relics in the jar were the bones of martyrs. The scroll was the Book of the Law. Amidon was becoming impressed, the solemn and ornate ritual and the dreadful symbols sent shivers down his inexperienced and undetermined spine. Blinking in with uninitiated eyes, as he had done, now seemed more and more a crime.

There was an "Opening Ode" which was so badly sung as to mitigate the awe; and an "order of business" solemnly gone through. Under the head "Obed of the Order" the visiting brethren spoke as if it were a class-meeting and they giving "testimony," one of them very volubly reminding the assembly of the great principles of the order, and the mighty work it had already accomplished in ameliorating the condition of a lost and wandering world. Amidon felt that he must have been very kind in failing to note the work until it was thus forced upon his notice; but he made a mental apology.

"By the way, Bramfield," said Mr. Slater during a recess preceding the initiation of candidates, "you want to give Stevens the best you've got in the Outacombé scene. Will you make it just straight ritual, or throw in some of those specialties of yours?"

"Stevens! Outacombé!" gasped Amidon. "specialties! I——"

"I wish you could have been here when I was put through," went on Mr. Slater. "I don't see how any one but a professional actor, or a person with your dramatic gifts, can do that part at all—it's so sort of ripping and—and libelous, you know. I look forward to your rendition of it with a good deal of pleasurable anticipation."

"You don't expect me to do it, do you?" asked Amidon.

"Why, who else?" was the counter-question. "We can't be expected to play on the bench the best man in Pennsylvania in that part, can we?"

"Come, Bramfield," said the Sovereign

sign FOSBIE, "get on your regalia for the Outacombé. We are about to begin."

"Oh, ay, now!" said Amidon, trying to be offhand about it, "you must get somebody else."

"What's that! Some one else? Very likely we shall! Very likely!" thus the Sovereign Pontiff with fine scorn. "Come, the regalia, and no nonsense!"

"I—I may be called out at any moment," urged Amidon, amidst an outcry that seemed to indicate a breach with the Martyrs then and there. "There are reasons why——"

Edgington took him aside. "Is there any truth in this story," said he, "that you have had some trouble with Stevens, and discharged him?"

"Oh, that Stevens?" gasped Amidon, as if the whole discussion had hinged on picking out the right one among an array of Stevenses. "Yes, it's true, and I can't help confide this——"

Edgington whispered to the Sovereign Pontiff, and the announcement was made that in the Outacombé scene Brother Bramfield would be assumed and Brother Bulfinch substituted.

"I knew I never, in any phase of consciousness, saw any of this, or knew any of these things," thought Florian. "It is incredible!"

Conviction, however, was turned upon him by the fact that he was now made to don a black domino and mask, and to march, carrying a tin-headed spear, with a file of similar figures to examine the candidate, who turned out to be Stevens, sitting in an ante-room, foolish and apprehensive, and looking withal much as he had done in the counting-room. He was now asked by the leader of the file, in a respectful tone, several formal questions, among others whether he believed in a Supreme Being. Stevens gasped, and said "Yes." He was then asked if he was prepared to endure any ordeal to which he might be subjected, and warned that unless he possessed nerves of steel, he had better turn back—for which measure there was yet time. Stevens, in a hoarse voice, indicated that he was ready for the worst, and desired to go on. Then all (except Amidon) in awesome accents

intended, "Be brave and obedient, and all may yet be well!" and they passed back into the lodge-room. Andson was now thoroughly impressed, and wondered whether Stevens would be able to endure the terrible trials hinted at.

Dressed in a white robe "typifying innocence," and marching to minor music played upon a piano, Stevens was escorted several times around the darkened room, stopping from time to time at the station of some officer, to receive highly improving lectures. Every time he was asked if he were willing to do anything, or believed anything, he said "Yes." Finally, with the Scroll of the Law in one hand, and with the other resting on the Bones of Martyrs, surrounded by the brethren whose drawn swords and leveled spears threatened death, he repeated an obligation which bound him not to do a great many things, and to keep the secrets of the order. To Andson it seemed really awful—albeit somewhat lurid in style, and when Alvord nudged him at one passage in the obligation, he resented it as an irreverence. Then he noted that it was a pledge to maintain the sanctity of the family circle of Brother Martyrs, and Alvord's reference of the night before to the obligation as affecting his association with the "strawberry blonde" took on new and fearful meaning.

Stevens seemed to be vibrating between fright and a tendency to laugh, as the voice of some well-known fellow citizen rumbled out from behind a deadly weapon. He was marched out, to the same minor music, and the first act was ended.

The really sinister part of it, Andson felt, was to come, as he could see no reason for making a secret of these very solemn and improving matters. Stevens felt very much the same way about it, and was informed that the next degree would test his obedience. He highly resolved to obey to the letter.

The next act darkened Stevens hood-winked, and the room light. He was informed that he was in the Catacombs, familiar to the Early Christians, and must make his way alone and in darkness, following the Clue of Faith which

was placed in his hands. Then came a white cord similar to the sort used by masons (in the building-trade). He grasped his way along by it to the station of the next officer, who warned him of the deadly consequences of disobedience. Thence he made his way onward, holding to the Clue of Faith—until he touched a trigger of some sort, which let down upon him an avalanche of tinware and such light and noisy articles, which frightened him so that he started to run, and was desperately tripped by the Deacon Miltont and a spearman, and caught in a net held by two others. A sinner ran about the room.

"Obey," thundered the Vice-Pontiff, "and all will be well!"

Stevens resumed the Clue. At the station of the next officer to whom it brought him, the nature of faith was explained to him, and he was given the password, "Ichthus," whispered so that all in that part of the room could hear the interdicted syllables. But he was adjured never, never to utter it, unless to the Guardian of the Portal upon entering the lodge, to the Deacon Miltont upon the opening thereof, or to a member, when he, Stevens, should become Sovereign Pontiff. Then he was faced toward the Vice-Pontiff, and told to answer loudly and distinctly the questions asked him.

"What is the lesson indicated in this Degree?" asked the Vice-Pontiff from the other end of the room.

"Obedience!" shouted Stevens in reply.

"What is the password of this Degree?"

"Ichthus!" responded Stevens.

A roll of stage-thunder sounded death-angely over his head. The piano was swept by a storm of heat-pistons; and deep cries of "Treason! Treason!" echoed from every side. Fear Stevens tottered, and fell into a chair placed by the Deacon Miltont. He saw the enormity of the deed of shame he had committed. He had told the password!

"You have all heard this treason," said the Sovereign Pontiff, in the deepest of chest-tones—"a treason unknown in all the centuries of the past! What is the will of the assembly?"

"I would impress upon the traitor's

head," said a voice from one of the high-backed chairs, "the ancient doom of the Law!"

"Doom, doom!" said all in unison, holding the "oo" in a most blood-curdling way. "Pronounce doom?"

"One fate, and one alone," pronounced the Sovereign Pontiff, "can be yours. Brothers, let him forthwith be executed in the Chair of the Chinking Chair, and hurled from the Turpenee Rock, to be dashed in fragments at its stony base!"

Amidon's horror was modified by the evidences of repressed glee with which this sentence was received. Yet he felt a good deal of concern as they brought out a great chest, threw the struggling Stevens into it, slammed down the ponderous lid and locked it. Stevens kicked at the lid, but said nothing. The members leaped with joy. A great chain was brought and wrapped clanking about the chest.

"Let me out," now yelled the Christian Martyr. "Let me out, damn you!"

"Doom, do-a-o-oom!" roared the voices; and said the Sovereign Pontiff, "Proceed with the execution!"

Now the chest was slung up to a hook in the ceiling, and gradually drove back by a pulley until it was far above the heads of the men, the chains meanwhile clanking continually against the receptacle, from which came forth a stream of smothered profanity.

"Mark him down to the victim's death!" shouted the Sovereign Pontiff. The chest was tilted, and swung like a pendulum lengthwise of the room, down almost to the floor and up nearly to the ceiling. The profanity now turned into a yell of terror. The Martyrs stopped one another's heads and grew wise in their faces with laughter. At a signal, a light box was placed where the chest would crash it (which it did with a sound like a small railway collision); the chest was stopped and the lid raised.

"Let the body receive Christian burial," said the Sovereign Pontiff. "Our vengeance ceases with death."

This truly Christian sentiment was received with universal approval. Death seemed to all a good place at which to stop.

"Brothers," said the Deacon Militant, as he struggled with the resurgent Stevens, "there seems some life here! He thinks the heart beats, and—"

The remainder of the passage from the ritual was lost to Amidon by reason of the fact that Stevens had placed one foot against the Deacon's stomach and hurled that august officer violently to the floor.

"Let every test of life be applied," said the Sovereign Pontiff. "Perchance some higher will than ours deems his preservation. Take the body hence for a time; if possible, restore him to life, and we will consider his fate."

The room which followed was clearly necessary to afford an opportunity for the calming of the rickshaws of the Martyrs. The stage, too, had to be reset. Amidon's ethnological studies had not equalled his reading in belletrics, and he was unable to see the deep significance of these rites from a historical standpoint, and that here was a survival of those crimes to which our painted and skin-clad ancestors devoted themselves in spasms of religious frenzy, gazed at by the cave-bear and the mammoth. The uneducated Amidon regarded them as inconceivable harlequin-play. While thus he mused, Stevens, who was still headstuck and being greatly lectured upon the virtue of Faith and the duty of Obedience, re-entered upon his ordeal.

He was now informed by the officer at the other end of the room, that every man must ascend into the Murchellion of Temptation and be tested, before he could be pronounced fit for companionship with Martyrs. Therefore, a weary climb heavenward was before him, and a great trial of his fidelity. Upon his patience, daring and fortitude depended all his future in the Order. He was marched to a ladder and bidden to ascend.

"I," said the Deacon Militant, "upon this companion-chair will accompany you."

But there was no other ladder and the Deacon Militant had to stand upon a chair.

Up the ladder labored Stevens, but,

though he climbed manfully, he remained less than a foot above the foot. The ladder went down like a treadmill, as Stevens climbed—it was an endless ladder rolled down on Stevens' side and up on the other. The Deacon Militant, from his perch on the chair, encouraged Stevens to climb faster so as not to be outstripped. With labored breath and steaming muscles he climbed, the martyr retting on the floor in movement all the more violent because silent. Amidon himself laughed to see this strenuous climb, so strikingly like human endeavor, which puts the climber out of breath, and raises him and a white-crested in temperature. At the end of perhaps five minutes, when Stevens might well have believed himself a hundred feet above the roof, he had achieved a dirty height of perhaps six feet, on the summit of a stage-property mountain, where he stood beside the Deacon Militant, his view of the surrounding plain cut off by paper-matched clouds, and facing a foul feud to whom the Deacon Militant confided that here was a candidate to be tested and qualified. Whereupon the first feud remarked "Ha, ha!" and bade them bind him to the Plutonian Thunderbolt and haul him down to the nether world. The Thunderbolt was a sort of toboggan on rollers, for which there was a slide running down presumably to the nether world, above mentioned.

The hoodwink was removed, and Stevens looked about him, treading warily like one on the top of a tower; the great height of the mountain made him giddy. Obediently he lay face downward upon the thunderbolt, and yielded up his wrists and ankles to fastenings provided for them.

"They're not going to lower him with these cords, are they?"

It was a stage-whisper from the darkness which spoke thus.

"Oh, I guess it's safe enough," said another, in the same sort of agitated whisper.

"Safe?" was the reply. "I tell you, it's sure to break! Some one stop 'em——"

To the heart of the martyred Stevens

these words struck panic. But as he opened his mouth to protest, the catastrophe occurred. There was a snap, and the toboggan shot downward. Beyond as he was, the victim could see below him a brick wall right across the path of his descent. He was helpless to move; it was useless to cry out. For all that, as he felt in imagination the crushing shock of his head driven like a battering-ram against this wall, he uttered a roar such as from Achilles might have roared armed nations to battle. And even as he did so, his head touched the wall, there was a crash, and Stevens lay side on a mattress after his ten-foot slide, surrounded by fragments of red-and-white paper which had lately been a wall. He was pale and agitated, and generally done for; but transcendently relieved when he had assured himself of the integrity of his cranium. This he did by repeatedly feeling of his head, and looking at his fingers for sanguinary results. As Amidon looked at him, he repeated of what he had done to this thoroughly maltreated fellow man. After the Catacombs scene, which was supposed to be impressive, and came more of the "homer" work, everybody crowded about Stevens, now invested with the collar and "jewel" of Martyrhood, and laughed, and congratulated him as upon some great achievement, while he looked half pleased and half bored. Amidon with the rest greeted him, and told him that after his vacation was over, he hoped to see him back at the office.

"That was a fine exemplification of the principles of the Order," said Alford as they went home.

"What was?" asked Amidon.

"Hiring old Stevens back," answered Alford. "You've got to live your principles, or they don't amount to much."

"Suppose some fellow should get into a lodge," asked Amidon, "who had never been initiated?"

"Well," said Alford, "there isn't much chance of that. I shouldn't dare to say. You can't tell what the fellows would do when such sacred things were profaned, you know. You couldn't tell what they might do."

XIV

THE TRIUMPH OF ISRAHIM THE WOLF

Then up and spoke forward the Fox King
 Lee a throne before!

"My citizens, seated before you, this deserves not
 down our seat!"

Then Duke and Lord and also crowd lord,
 should thanks give for our seat—
 Thanks of Douglas the Wolf, and Evans strong,
 the Great!

His noblemen, the barons, our knights
 protest.

We crown the Great's support for our legitimate
 interests! —An Appeal to King Lee.

The string of Mr. Peter

Reems quite credits to us.

When I see white fives in abundance

At our meeting!

—Annals of America.

Any business man will be able to appreciate the diffidence which beset the president of the Broadfield Oil Company, upon the discharge of Mr. Stevens. On the morning after the lodge-meeting, behold Mr. Amidon at his desk, contemplating a rising pile of unanswered letters. His countenance expresses defeat, despair and aversion. His politeness toward Miss Strong is never-failing; but that he is not himself grows more and more apparent to that young woman.

"Here's the third letter from the Raysons refinery," she said. "An immediate reply is demanded."

"Oh, yes," said Amidon, "certainly; that has gone too long! We must get at that matter at once: let me see the contracts and correspondence."

"That is the business," said Miss Strong, "which they claimed to have arranged with you in a conversation over the long-distance 'phone. That's what seems to be the matter with them—they want to make a record of it."

"I don't remember— Well," said Amidon, "lay that by for a moment. And this piece of business with the A. B. & C. Railway. Who knows anything about this claim for demurrage?"

"Mr. Stevens," said Miss Strong, "had that in hand, and said he told you all about it before you went away, and that you were going to see about it in—"

"In New York, I suppose," exclaimed Amidon. "Well, I didn't. Can't you

and Mr. Alderman take up this pile of letters and bring 'em to me with the correspondence, and—and papers—and things? I've been too far in the past, is not referring to the records. I must have the records, Miss Strong, in every case."

"Yes, sir," said Miss Strong; "since we adopted that new system of filing, I don't see how the records can be made any fuller, or how you can be more fully acquainted with them than you now are—"

"Not at all," answered Mr. Amidon. "I find myself uncertain as to a great many things. Let's have the records constantly."

"Yes, sir, but these are cases where there isn't anything. Nobody but you and Mr. Stevens knows anything about them."

"Well, I can't answer them now," protested Mr. Amidon. "I've a headache! My—my mind isn't clear—is confused on some of these things; and they'll all have to wait awhile. What's that tapping? Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Edgington—you startled me so that I— Mr. Edgington here? Well, why don't you show him in? After luncheon, Miss Strong, you may come in again."

Mr. Edgington had a tightly varied mustache, a pink flush upon his cheeks, wore an obviously new sack suit, had a coronation in his buttonhole, came in with an air of marked hurry, and carried a roll of papers.

"I thought I must have a talk with you," said he, "on the evidence in that Evans's Ferry land case. The time for taking evidence is rapidly passing, and the court warned us that it wouldn't be extended again. That proof you must furnish, or we shall be beaten."

"Yes—yes, I see," said Amidon, who knew absolutely nothing about the matter. "We should feel really annoyed by such a termination!"

"Accepted?" exclaimed the lawyer. "Say, Broadfield, you remind me of Artemus Ward's statement that he was 'bashed' when some one died! You'd lose the best wells you've got. And it would involve those trunks to the Waldrons, and might carry them down."

"The Waldrons," exclaimed Florian.

"Why, I mean Miss Beane and her aunt," said Edgington. "I mean back-rapery—— But we've gone all over that before."

Amidon nodded, with an air of knowing all.

"Lots of time," said he. "And this evidence is——? Please give me the exact requirements—or, again."

"The exact requirements," said Edgington, "as I have frequently shown you, and without its doing much good, are to prove that some time in March, 1886, you did not make a partnership agreement with this man Corkery by which you were to share with him the proceeds of your oil-prospecting, and under which he went into possession of this tract of land. He has a line of testimony which shows that you did. Proving a negative is rather unusual, but about the only thing which will save you is an alibi. Now you must pardon the expression, but you've always evaded my questions as to your whereabouts prior to June of that year. You've never fairly denied Corkery's story, but if it weren't for the inherent improbability of it, I'd have given up the fight long ago, for you have not helped as a client should. You haven't conceded——"

"But I will!" said Amidon, energetically. "The man's a perjuror, and I'll prove it! All that time I was in Wisconsin, I was—I'll prove where I was——"

"Good!" cried Edgington, noting a tendency to falter. "And now for the names and addresses of a few witnesses, and we'll go after them!"

"Witnesses—yes, yes—we shall need witnesses, won't we?" faltered Amidon. "Say, Mr. Edgington, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll turn you over to Blodgett."

"The old gentleman at the hotel?"

"The same," replied Amidon. "He was my lawyer, years ago. I'll send him to you this afternoon."

Edgington made some notes in a book.

"Very well," said he. "I'm glad that puzzle is in process of solution. And

now one thing further, and I am done. This is a question of local politics. You know the talks we've had with the fellows about this trolley franchise, and the advisability of making you mayor. We all agree that your interests and mine and those of all our crowd demand your election to the place——"

"Me mayor?" shouted Amidon. "Me run for office! Why, Mr. Edgington, you must be crazy!"

"Well, this—certainly—is—refreshing!" expostulated Edgington, in apparent amazement. "When can anything be supposed settled, between gentlemen, if that isn't? Why, continued it, didn't we make up the complete slate, including control of the Common Council? And aren't we to have an exclusive franchise on all the streets, with your signature as mayor? Of course, you're joking now. But since you've come back from this trip of yours, everything seems to be going in unexpected ways—and somehow you've given offense to Condon, the labor leader. Do you know what it was?"

"No," answered Amidon, with some heat. "I don't know what it was! I don't know Condon, and I don't know anything about this business except this: that if you think I'm going to sneak into office for the purpose of stealing the streets of this town, you don't know Florian Amidon, that's all!"

"Don't know what? Don't know whom?"

"Don't know Florian—me! Me!"

"Then you won't see Henry Condon?"

"I won't find my hands with the dirty men! I won't——"

"Dirty men, indeed!" retorted Edgington, "when the best business men—— Oh, well, if that's the way you feel—— Why didn't you say so, instead of—— I think we'd best not discuss the thing any further, Mr. Brausefeld; and returning to legal matters, where we are happily at one, let me remind you that you are to send Judge Blodgett up to see me regarding the Corkery case this afternoon. Good day, Mr. Brausefeld!"



The Occultation of Florian Amidon

BY HERBERT QUICK

Synopsis.—The opening incidents relate how Florian Amidon, broker in a small Western city, starts on a short journey in June, 1894, leaves the train at a junction and knows nothing more until he awakes in a sleeping-car approaching New York city, in February, 1900. He discovers that he has the clothes and other effects of a Payson Brassfield, oil dealer, of Belleville, Pennsylvania. To add to the dilemma, in Amidon's pockets are love-letters signed "Elizabeth B. Adams." In New York he meets "occultists," Miss Clara de Clare and her father, Professor Blatherwick, restore Amidon to the Brassfield consciousness and find out much about the oil man. Amidon meets an old friend, Judge Blodgett, who goes to Belleville to make further investigations. Amidon follows, accompanied by the "occultists," and meets Elizabeth, to whom it appears Brassfield was engaged, at the station. He afterwards calls on the girl, who is full of plans for her future home, but he manages to keep her in ignorance of the situation. Amidon discovers that Brassfield, while a prosperous and reputable business man, is not one of the purest caliber. Although engaged, he is not above flirting with other women. This puzzles Amidon, who is the soul of honor. But Brassfield is popular in the town and is a prominent member of a secret society—the Ancient Order of Christian Masters. Amidon's difficulties in taking up Brassfield's business may be imagined. It learns that certain corporations are planning to make the oil man mayor on their own interests, and he rejects a man named Edgington who calls to set the supposed Brassfield about it.

XIV.—Continued



MRS. AMIDON was flushed after this encounter. Mr. Edgington's cool manner of approaching him with this questionable and shady political job had generated some heat in Florian—a man always possessed of strong convictions concerning civic purity. He was offended; yet he knew that it was to the turpitude of Bradford that he owed this, rather than to any fault of Edgington's.

"How could such a fellow as Bradford reap such success?" was Amidon's mental speculation. "Ready to rob the community, he enjoys the confidence of all; full of the propensities of a Don Juan, he wins the respect and love of Elizabeth Walkron! Bradford's commentary upon society, and— Yes, Miss Strong, who is there? Judge Hodgson! and him right in— Judge, I'm glad you came in. I'm very glad. I need your advice and aid."

"All right," said the judge, lighting a cigar. "What's up, Florian?"

"You've seen a Mr. Edgington?"

"Your lawyer," replied the judge. "The Notes tell all about him."

"Well," resumed Amidon, "he's been here, and I learn that there is some very important litigation pending, which we've got to win. Because it involves others—Miss Walkron and her aunt—and this man Bradford never could give Edgington the evidence he needed in order to win."

"Why couldn't he?"

"Because," said Amidon, with the air of a man relating something of the deepest significance, "it involves matters happening before June, when, and Bradford was not in existence until the twenty-seventh of June! I've promised Edgington that you will get him the evidence he wants."

"What's the rub of the case?" asked the judge.

"A man claims I gave him some rights—or that Bradford did—you understand?"

"I see."

"—In March, 1865?"

"If not?" exclaimed the judge, contemptuously. "March, eh? Why, we can rehearse the whole town of Bradford, and show that you were at that time acting

as a pillar of society there, every day in that year, up to June twenty-seventh!"

"But, don't you see," said Amidon, "that proving this makes my whole story false?"

Judge Hodgson thoughtfully gazed in to space.

"Yes, it would appear so," said he, at last, "but is that necessarily so? You can testify that you were in Bradford at that time, and legally, that's the same thing as saying that Bradford was—I guess, and I'll swear to it, too; and if they aren't too searching on cross-examination, we may slide through—but there'll be some fishy spots. I'll see Mr. Edgington, and find out just how strong a fabric of perjury we've got to go against. We may have to get more witnesses—and that'll be this morn, too. I'll look in again this afternoon."

"Please do so," replied Mr. Amidon. "Look at these letters! Do you suppose your Notes would shed any light on what they're driving at?"

The judge looked them over.

"I don't remember anything in the Notes," said he, "respecting these matters. But you could take 'em up to the hotel, and Miss de Chase could put you to sleep and talk it out of you in five minutes."

"I'll do it!" said Amidon. "I'll get Bradford's views on them, confound him! I'll do this whole year's work with Edgington. Good-by until after luncheon."

Miss de Chase was examining Mr. Bradford with reference to the unannounced lesson. Professor Hawthorne was engaged in taking down his answers. In a disastrous moment, Mr. Alderson knocked at the door, and following his knocking, delivered a breathless message to Bradford that an important telegram demanded instant attention.

"All right," replied Mr. Bradford, cheerily, "I'll toddle right down to the office with you, my boy. Excuse me, madame, you may rely upon my seeking a resumption of this pleasant interview at the earliest possible moment. Au revoir!"

Miss de Chase was perplexed. Should she allow him to go out in this hypnotic state? Could she exercise her art in Alderson's presence? While she debated, Mr. Bradford stily bowed himself out, and was gone!



Drawn by Bruce Lowrie

WILLIAM AND JANE'S COUNTRY

Bellefleur is not so large a place that neighbor's affairs are not observed of neighbor. Prior to the elaboration of the law of thought transference, there was no way of accounting for the universality of knowledge of other people's affairs which certain Bellefleur circles enjoyed. The good gossiping housewives along the high-ways leading into the town are often able to tell the exact contents of the packages brought home by their neighbors, under the seats of their buggies and farm-wagons and late at night; but this is a phenomenon not at all unusual. Neither is it in the least strange that, in town or country, John and Sarah could not sit out an evening together in the parlor or sitting-room without all that occurred being talked over, with perfect certainty as to facts, on the next day's meeting of the Missionary Society or the Monday Club. But what Pippin thought,

what were the plans of Thersyfs, and how Jane felt when William jilted her, and why William did it—all of which were canvassed with equal certitude—are things the knowledge of which, as I said above, was not to be accounted for on any theory at all consistent with respect for the people possessing it, until thought-transference came into fashion. Now all is clear, and our debt to science is increased by another large item.

Mr. Brinsford and his affairs were as a city set upon a hill, and could not be hid. There was a maid in Brinsford's home, and a maid-servant who had confidential friends. A stenographer and bookkeepers were employed in the counting-room of the Brinsford Oil Company, and the stenographer had a friend in the tailor's shop, and an adviser who was a clerk in one of the banks. There were clerks and other

organizations, social, religious and literary; and the people in all of them had tongues wherever to talk, and ears for hearing.

Hence

At the meeting of the Society for Ethical Research, Mrs. Meyer read an essay on "What 'Parola' Has Taught Me," during the reading of which Mrs. Alford described



Drawn by Frank L. Smith

"HAPPY CONTEMPORARIES" HAVE THE PROVERBIAL
"YOU DO IT YOURSELF BY THE NAME OF THE"

Miss Waldron's testimony to Miss Finch and Dr. Julia Brown. Because of the conversation among these three, the president asked Doctor Brown, first of all, to discuss the paper. And Doctor Julia, who talked less and had respectably full-blown bangs and a greatly over-tanned visage, said that

she fully agreed with the many and deeply beautiful thoughts expressed in the paper.

"I'm sincerely glad 'Parola' taught her something!" said the fair M.D. in her compassion, as she resumed her seat. Mrs. Meyer was the only woman in the town who had ever been to Havrebois; she added short-handedly in explanation of her remarks, and had lobbied herself into a place on the program on the strength of that fact.

"Does Mrs. know," asked Miss Finch, "about this mysterious person?"

"Oh, there isn't anything there," said Doctor Brown, "I feel sure. Though his last—ah, friendship with this Le Chien woman is, just at this time, in bad taste. But all men are natural polygamists, you know."

"They say," said the voice of a member from across the room, "that it will be quite a palace—throw everything else in Bellevue into the shade—entirely so."

"They are all talking of it," said Mrs. Alford. "Jim says it seems odd to have this Mr. Blodgett looking into the Brassfield business. But everything is odd, now—the hypnotist and Mr. Blodgett, and Daisy Scarlett; she's still here."

"Oh—ah!" said Doctor Brown, in a nervous barytone circumlocution.

"Really," said Miss Finch, who went her dress high about the neck, and whose hair was a symphony in angles, "such postmodern associations may be shocking, but as to mystery—who knows anything of his life before he came here?"

"Judge Blodgett," said Doctor Brown, "told a friend of mine that he had known Brassfield from infancy."

"The first light Bellevue has ever received on a dark past," said Miss Finch, "if it is light. And how strange he acts! Everybody notices it. Always so chatty and almost voluble before, and now—why, he's dreadfully laconic. You know how he treated you, Miss Brown?"

"Yes, and he knows how I treated him for it!" said Doctor Brown. "I propose to call people down when they act so with me!"

"Quite right," said Mrs. Alford, "quite correct, doctor. Oh, what a change! And who has changed for the worse lately more than Bruce Waldron? Pale, silent and clearly unhappy. I can't attach any importance to that silence of the strange



Drawn by Owen Lewis

"HARD TO PLEASE! EYES FOR MYSELF AND ALL ABOUT IN THEIR WAY, BUT SOME THINGS REQUIRE PERSONAL ATTENTION."

woman with the striped hair; but that Miss Scarlett matter—that's quite different. Just now I saw the beginning of that up in the mountains last summer. Daisy Scarlett is a queer girl, so wild and headstrong—bapt the people who know her in Atlanta just think the world of her, the same as do the people in Belleville—and her appearance here right after the announcement of the engagement means something. Four feet! Hush! There she comes. Oh, hush, it's so sweet of you to come, even if you are so late! Everybody has been saying such sweet things of you!"

"How kind of them!" said Elizabeth. "Has 'Fanny' received any attention?"

Now, at this very moment the Mr. Bransfield whom they all knew was going forth with Alderson from the Blatherswick parlor; Florian Ambion was effaced, and Miss de Clare was sitting in wide-eyed stress of anxiety at the thing she had done, and wondering how it would end.

XV

THE TOWER OF BRANSFIELD

Man to Mark Mifflint's likeness
When upon himself he reckons,
Moralist Faith among his assets,
Blends his nature's many facets
This dull gem to an acorn,

*Blindness, jealousy, a paltry bribe:
Still the light—a trifling matter—
For Ambion turns a thief!*

—The Kalevala, etc.

Alrily Mr. Bransfield propped his chest down the stairway, and out upon the street. There, something in the air—the halm of advancing spring; a faint chill—the Furlian shot of retreating winter; some psychic apprehension of the rising sun; the slight northing of the sun; or some subconscious clutch at knowledge of minute alterations in the landscape—agitated Mr. Bransfield's strangely circumscribed mind of the maladjustment with time resulting from the reign of Ambion. But however belittled Florian's mortality might become at such things, it was different with Bransfield. The plane of consciousness in which he had so long moved, with a memory running back five years and there ending in a blank wall of existence, had made him cunning and shifty—necessarily so. The struggle for existence had had its inevitable effect—the faculty paralyzed had been compensated for by the development of others. So he was not at all at a loss now, when this little hiatus in time struck upon his mind in the form of a suspicion. He turned to Alderson with a smile.

"Do you remember what date this is, my boy?" he inquired.

Alderson named the date, Brausefield nodded, as if he were pleased to find Alderson correct in his surmise.

"Of course you know what we've arranged for to day, don't you?" he went on.

"The deferred annual meeting of the Construction Company?" asked Alderson. "If that's it, it's all attended to—I took the promise to Mr. Smith yesterday."

"Good!" was Brausefield's hearty response. "You'll do for an animated 'office stroller' if you continue to improve. You used to forget all these things."

They had now come to a certain turning, down which Brausefield guard, to a place where the highway was torn up and excavated. A center line of beamed larch, fringed by flying dirt, indicated that the work was still in progress.

"You may go on to the office," said Brausefield, "and I'll be up immediately. I'm going down to see Barney Condon a moment."

He walked down among the men, nodding to the busy ones, and stopping for a handshake or a joke with others.

"Hello, Barney," he shouted to the man who seemed to be in charge. "How long are you going to keep people jumping sidewalks to prevent themselves from being heated alive? You old Foulard!"

Condon looked at him for a moment with an air of distinct defiance.

"Look out there!" he shouted to a scampster who was unloading pipe. "If you want to kill the men in the trench? Ah, is that you, Mr. Brausefield?"

"What's left of me," replied Brausefield, quickly sensitive to the conscious of the scampster—the politician's attentiveness to danger. "By the way, Condon, can't you come up to the office soon? I've got some specifications I want you to see. Pipe line. Can you do that sort of work?"

"Do it?" gasped Condon, thawing. "Do it? Ah, Mr. Brausefield, d'ye ask me that, when ye mind 'toss me that done the Rogers job?"

"Oh, yes, I remember now, you did have that," said Brausefield. "Well, that was fairly well done. Come up and figure with me, and I believe we can make a deal."

"Thank ye kindly, Mr. Brausefield," said Condon, all his obsequiousness returning. "Thank ye! Anything new in politics, Mr. Brausefield?"

"I don't know a thing," said Brausefield.

"I'm so busy with other things, you know——"

"It'll be a great house," said Condon, "or so I should take it, to be the main of the city, an' master of the first new house an' all that'll be in it, all this same spring."

"Yes, Condon, yes—but as to the office—I don't know about that."

"They can't lose you," answered Condon.

"Oh, I don't know," demurred Brausefield. "You can't always tell."

"We're well yet, to a man," asserted Condon, growing warmer. "The common people are wld ye!"

"I'm glad to hear that," said Brausefield, "very glad. But business first, and this pipe line is business. Of course, if the people demand it——"

"They will!"

"—why, I may—— I'll see, Condon. Anyhow, I appreciate your friendship. Come up and see me."

And the candidate for mayor walked away, wondering how he could have offended Condon, and rejoiced that he had "kissed" him in time.

"Where's the telegram?" he asked, as he entered his private office. "Why, Stevens might have attended to this. Where's Mr. Stevens? Miss Strong, send Mr. Stevens in!"

"Mr. Stevens?" gasped Miss Strong. "Mr. Stevens—why——"

"Oh, I mean where does he live now? I heard he was moving. And by sending him in, I mean, if you happen to meet him," hastily amended Mr. Brausefield, noting some error. "I want to see him. And show me his account, please, and kindly ring for a boy to take this message."

The books showed the discharge of Mr. Stevens, and the closing of his account. Brausefield looked over it, but resumed his work at Miss Strong's reentrance.

"Let's see," said he. "What have we for this afternoon? These unanswered—— Why, Miss Strong, these must be attended to at once! Please take some letters for me."

He had dropped into his rat. For an hour or more Miss Strong's fingers flew as she wrote down his dictation, and at the end of that time the letters were answered, and the communications which had so perplexed Alderson were laid away among other things done. The office door

breaked loudly once more, with the freedom of returning efficiency in management.

The man who had brought this relief to his employees, now looked at his watch, rose, went out, and walking boldly down the main street, nodding to an acquaintance here, and speaking to another there, made his way out among the houses of the town.

Here his brisk walk gradually slowed down to a saunter. He was striding toward the house with the white columns. Suddenly coming into view, as she turned a corner and walked on before him, appeared a young lady. Not much alike in the descriptive line would be necessary to the recognition of her by any of this girl's acquaintances, within any ordinary range of vision. If there were no certain revelation in the short, neatly attired, quick-moving figure, there could be no mistake concerning the vividly brilliant hair, which gleamed under the scarcely turned fabric of felt, feathers and velvet which covered it, like a brilliant cloud-drapery over a red sunset. Mr. Brausefield seemed to recognize her, for he quickened his pace so as to overtake her before she could come to a gateway, into which her glance and movements indicated that she was about to turn. He walked up by her side, and manifested to her his presence by falling two steps and lightly pinching her shapely elbow.

"How do-do, Daisy-daisy!" said he, with the utmost assurance. "When did you bring the town the blessing of your presence?"

The lady gave a little scream.

"Gene Brausefield!" she ejaculated; and then, with a little quivering emphasis, "You! How you frightened me!"

"I know, I know!" replied Brausefield, peeping under the big hat into her eyes. "Almost scared to death, so it quite proper. But, to my question: how long, how long has been him?"

"Oh, several days—before you came back. Auntie wanted me to be here when her sister, my Aunt Blanche from Haverhill—that's up in Wisconsin—wrote her. There's to be a reception. Oh course you'll be there, and——"

"Of course," responded Brausefield. "Did I ever absent myself from any social affair in which your charming aunt, Mrs. Penphrey, is interested? Nay, nay; but don't

dodge. Why this throw-down? Why didn't you let me know——"

"Gene," said the girl, "you can't deceive me. I'm assured that I wrote the note, and your telling a fib about getting it won't make it any better. But it was wicked of you not to answer. I only wanted you to come to me and—and talk it all over, and say good-by forever. It wasn't necessary to——"

"I have never received any note," said Brausefield, totally unconscious of the misdeed which Amidon had promptly waste-less-looked. "What was it?"

"Really? Didn't you?" she queried, pointing her red lips most vividly. "A little note, unsigned, with some—some verses? No? Then I'll forgive you—for that. But—go on, 'Gene, up to the house tender—go on!"

"You oughtn't to be permitted to run as large," said he, "with that hat, and those lips. I wonder if anyone's looking?"

"You mustn't talk that way," she said, "nor look at me like that! Go on, or I shall cry—or something quite as bad! Oh, maybe you'll come in? Billy Cox is in there waiting for me, and watching, I dare say."

"Some other time," replied Brausefield. "I shall be delighted. But Miss Wadsworth has just been driven out into the street, and if she comes this way, I must exhibit my self to her, and maybe she'll pick me up. She's turning this way—Billy, eh? Happy Billy, nice boy, too, since he stopped drinking. By-by, Daisy-daisy!"

Elizabeth came dashing down the road, and walking up it came Aaron, pale messenger of the various Misses. Le Claire, who had enlisted Aaron in her service to bring Brausefield again within her magic robes. He reached the object of his search before the carriage passed, and delivered a note.

"Tell Miss. Le Claire," said Brausefield, whose cheeks with reluctance to that person must have been very busy, "that such an invitation is a command. I'll be with her immediately."

He stood smiling, hat in hand, at the doorway, as Elizabeth drove by. She halted, and looked questioningly at him. This—very, this confident, a-part—all these were so different from his recent bearing that she was surprised, and not more than half pleased. The element of co-existence in his attitude toward the other girl was not

seen in his treatment of Elizabeth, to whom it would have been offensive. Perhaps the cunning of the consciously abnormal intellect was the cause of this, or it may have been some excommunication of dignity from the woman herself acting upon a mind in a state chronically hysterical. Be the cause what it may, to Elizabeth, with all its confidence and ardor, he was most detrimental and correct in manner, and to her, these manners had undergone no change. Confidently, and no shadow had ever come over their relations, he put his foot upon the step of the carriage.

"Won't you give me a lift," said he, "and put me down at my home?"

She made room for him with scarcely more than a word. "To the Bellevue House," said she to the coachman.

Brausefeld looked at her, so grave, so distinguished, so cordis sweet, and forgot apparently that there was any one else in the world. He slipped his hand under the lap robe, and gave her a gentle pressure.

"Dearest!" he half-whispered, caring very little whether he was overheard or not.

She returned the caress by the slightest possible compunction, and put her hand outside the robe. Whether the one action was excited by a desire to avoid complete unresponsiveness, and from a sense of duty only, the other left undisturbed. They rode on silently, and at the hotel he respectfully left her, with a promise that he would call at night. Then he walked up the stairs, and straight to the parlor of Le Chateau. In another half hour, Mr. Ambrose was back to his office, eagerly pursuing the work of the afternoon, and wondering where the president of the company had gone on his stroll.

At the club, of course, no such going as that uttered at the meeting of the Society for Ethical Research was heard. News was shown such things. To be sure, Alford and Slater and Edgington and the rest of "the gang" did exchange views on some matters involving the welfare of the club—and on the course of duty.

"I tell you," said Slater, "Bress has been practicing that French doctrine about hunting for the woman—a little too industriously. They're getting to be something—something——"

"Fierce," suggested Alford.

"Well, that isn't quite what I meant to

say," said Slater, "but pretty near. 'Terrible as an army with banners,' you know, and condemned near as numerous."

"It's changed Brausefeld like a cast of paint, this engagement," said Edgington. "I saw something last week that showed me more than you could print in a book as big as the *American Digest*. You see, he went out of gaslighting down by where the sewer gang was at work, like a man in a strange country full of hostiles, and although he must have been conscious of the fact that he's slated for mayor in the spring, he never showed that he knew of the presence of a human being, to say nothing of a rat, in the whole gang, and Barney Conker's gang, too. Why, he'd better have done anything than ignore 'em! He'd better a darn sight have used and sung 'Deil, Ye Tarriers, Deil!' as a political move. Now that shows a revolution in his nature. It's serious, and it'll play the deuce with the show if it goes on."

"Well, you all know what took place at his counting room," asked Slater, "the day after he got back from New York? Old Bressens resigned on the street the night before, and Bress didn't seem to know any more than to accept his resignation. I fired him back since, I've heard, but he ought not to have noticed it. He certainly has gone off balls."

"I knew a fellow once," said Edgington, "who went out of crazy on the girl question—lumpy. D'ye know this engagement——"

"Their change to their lady friends," said Slater, "sometimes. But he—why, he proved me a dozen times with a cold stare!"

"My, now," said Edgington, "and he didn't seem to know Elvira Smith when he met her, and Dr. Julia Brown gave him a calling-down on the street—a public lecture on etiquette. Colonel McCorkle claims to have been insulted by him, and won't come any longer to the same committees with him in the Commercial Association. And he sits at the head all the time, and seems afraid to leave this old judge and colleagues with the German professor and the scientist—and, let me tell you, I've seen supplies in the hospital that were worse-looking than she is—and what is thater it means, I tell you."

"He wants the judge and the professor at our supper next week," asked Slater.

"I've sent 'em invitations," said Alvord. "Anything to please the patient. I could tell you a good deal about this, fellows; but 'Gene and I are brothers and closer than brothers; and 'F. B. and B.' goes with me, but it won't hurt anything for you to know that he's got loads of trouble, and you haven't one of you come within a mile of the mark. He told me all about it the night he got back from New York. I think it will blow over if things can be kept from blowing up instead, for a few days—dumbaring science—women scared—hell's fire, you know, don't ask me any more. But this hiding out won't do."

"Well, I should think not," said Slater. "We've got to get him going about as usual or there'll be questions asked and publicity—those red-headed women are pretty vibrant conversationists when they get mad, and you can't tell what may be pulled off, even if he acts as natural as life."

"This supper ought to help some," said Edgington.

"It will," said Alvord. "We must make it a ham-finger. And we must see that he shows himself offener at the club and lodge-meetings and hops. Why, it's shameful, the way we've let him drop out."

As was recently remarked, men are slow to go up.

Now, at the hotel, conference after conference had taken place in the parlor of Professor Blumenshield, and Blodgett & Blumenshield's Name had been studied out most assiduously. Judge Blodgett and Florian Amidon had spent their days at the counting-house, and an increased force of clerks worked conscientiously in making up statements and balances showing the condition of the business. Amidon could now draw checks in the name of Blumenshield with no more than a dim sense of committing forgery. The banks, however, refused to honor them at first, and the fellow noted the fact that after his return from New York Mr. Blumenshield adopted a new style of signature, and wondered at it. Some noticed a change in all his handwriting, but in these days of the typewriter such a thing makes little difference. He always went from bowling (to the playing of which Blumenshield had been devoted), and his absolute failure at billiards, were discussed in sporting circles, and accounted for on the theory that he had "gone stale" were this latter failure had become the absorbing

business of his life. No one understood, however, his sudden interest in photography, and his marvelous skill in it. He seemed to be altogether a transformed man.

"I am beginning to see through this," said Amidon, referring to the business.

"Yes," said the judge, "this side of the affair is assuming a pretty satisfactory aspect. But your reputation is suffering by the sort of constraint you've been under. These things are important. A man's behavior is worth money to him. Money a man gets credit at the bank on the strength of the safe and conservative ways he practices. Business requires you to act sane like Blumenshield. A man who uses a good deal of money must be like other people who use a good deal of money. He mustn't have rians, and he mustn't be for any reasons except impractical ones, and he mustn't have the reputation of being 'queer.' Isn't that so, professor?"

"Quite uncontrollable," said the professor. "You must make up vit more people."

"And in other matters besides business," said the judge. "Hours of flowers every few minutes are all right in their way, but some things require personal attention."

Amidon blurted:

"You see," said he, "if every one were not so strange; if part of the people were as familiar to me as I am to them, it wouldn't be so trying. I suppose these exceptions, and other functions to follow, I must attend alone. But you two are going to that banquet with me?"

"Oh, certainly," said the judge. "I want to see just what sort of a gang you've been forgetting with here. The folks at Blumenshield —"

"Must never know, Judge! And you, professor?"

"I shall be more than blessed. Superlatively gratified, I regard it as a chance of a lifetime."

"Well," said Amidon, "you are very good, and I am glad that's settled. Now I want you to grant me another favor—or claim, rather. I should be more than glad if she would ask Blumenshield about some things that there's no need for you people to hear. It's nothing about the business. Won't you see if she will give me a—demonstration?"

The judge and the professor deep-pearled, and soon went away that Morn-

le Claire would give him audience. Arden's heart beat willingly as he came into her presence. For this man's conscience was a most unobtrusive conscience, and held as wrong the things left and thought, as well as things said and done; and his reserve was as that of an abandoned but repentant jilt. But when he saw how cheerfully she smiled, he grew easier in his mind. The woman always has such a marvellous fully under control—I mean the other party's mind.

"Well?" said she, interrogatively—"at last? I have been wondering what I was brought down here for?"

"It must have been very dull and homesome—" he began.

"Oh, no!" she answered. "I am a business woman, you know, and I haven't been idle. And now, there is something you need, my friend? Let us begin at once."

There were definite repudiation of claims to tenderness, clear denial of resentment, in her tone. Arden brightened and reddened. He stammered like a boy teased by reference to his first love-affair.

"You are wonderfully kind," he said. "I wanted to ask you to have this Brasfield tell you all he will about the wedding—the date, and everything you can get out of the fellow. And have him act as naturally as you can, so as to see more clearly how he carries himself. You see what I want, don't you?"

"I think so," she returned. "Conversation must be a little difficult, isn't it? You remembered some of the things I told you about?"

"Difficult?" he exclaimed. "Oh, Clara, it's impossible! It's so much so, that I hardly dare go back any more. I'm sending flowers and notes and doing the best I can, but it won't do. I must call often—must! And I'm afraid I have spoiled everything."

"Then you find the lady quite unobtainable?"

"She's adorable," went on Arden, with the gush which comes at the first opportunity to discuss the dear one with a sympathetic third party. "She's perfectly superb! I have thought of nothing, dreamed of nothing, since I left her, except, except—"

"Ah!" said Clara. "the situation must

be perfectly lovely—for you—both— And I'm sure you get along nicely."

"No, no! I spoiled everything. I know I did. But bring this fellow up and ask him those things, please; and also about a Miss Scarlett— No, leave that out. Just about the wedding, and about—I was going to ask about our house; but the judge found that out, where it is, and all. Just about the—the things between her and me, a little more, you know?"

The hypocritical subject yields more and more readily to control by repeated reminders. So there was little of going into the particularized eyes now.

"You will soon sleep," said Miss le Claire, in that dominating way of hers, "and when you wake you will be Eugene Brasfield just as he used to be, and the room and all the surroundings, and myself—all will seem familiar, and you will be quite at home with me. Sleep, sleep!"

Her hand swept down and closed his eyes, and he lay back in his chair unmoved. Miss le Claire sat long and looked at him yearningly. She smoothed back the hair from his brow with many soft touches, and stroked and soothed kissed his forehead. Then she lightly tapped his wrist, and sharply said, "Wake!"

Eugene Brasfield opened his eyes with a start. There was something still faintly suggestive of tenderness in the look with which Miss le Claire regarded him, and he returned it with the air of a man to whom such looks are neither unusual nor unpleasant.

"We were just talking," said she, with the air of reminding him of a topic from which he had wandered, "about your wedding. When is it to be?"

"The appointed date," said he. "is April the fifth; but, of course, I shall move for an earlier one if possible."

"I should think," remarked Miss le Claire, "that the date fixed would give Miss Wadsworth all too short a time for preparation."

"From a woman's standpoint," said Mr. Brasfield. "It probably seems so. But you and I can surely find matters of more mutual interest to talk about, can't we?"

"Perhaps," said the girl, "but I don't think of anything just now. Do you?"

"Well, for one thing," said he. "I have just found out what makes your eyes so beautiful."

"Wouldn't it be just as well to cease discovering things of that kind? It's so short a time to the fifth of April, you know."

"For made all my money," said Bransfield, "by never quitting discovering. I like it. And this has had especially."

"I think there are other lines of investigation," said she, "which demand your time and attention."

"Oh, please!" said he. "Don't be so pedantic. You know that your eyes are beautiful, and you are not really offended when I tell you so. Such eyes are the books in which I like to read—I can understand them better than Browning, or the old Persian book. It's not unpleasant to get a volume you understand—at times."

"Why, Mr. Arndson—Bransfield, I mean—aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"A little," said he; "not much, though. And who is this 'Mr. Arndson,' or whatever the name is, that is so much in mind that you call me by his name when you speak without thinking?"

"A dear friend of mine!"

"Well, now, if you should happen to see something agreeable in me, and should let me know about it, I shouldn't throw your Mr. Arndson, or Arndson, at your head. Why not forget about the rest of the world for a while? We can be in only one place at a time, and so, really our whole world just now has only us two. You oughtn't to reject the only person in the male, male world, and you won't, will you, now?"

"Don't be foolish!"

"Don't be wasteful! This may be the only world of this kind we shall be allowed to have. Come over and sit by me and be nice to me, won't you?"

"I certainly shall do nothing of the kind!"

"No? Ah, how wasteful of opportunity! Well, then, I shall have to come to you!"

Oh, the depravity of society in these days, and oh, the unpleasantness of setting these things down! But, on the other hand, what a comfort it is to think that men as base as Bransfield are so rare that

you and I, my boy, have probably never met a specimen. And if you ever find, my love, that any person in whom you have any tender interest has ever behaved in a way similar to the conduct of Bransfield, you should give the person the benefit of every doubt, and accord full weight to the precedent contained in this history, and so the fact that it was Bransfield and not Arndson who did them. A man cannot be blamed for leaping into the Bransfield state. A man should be acquitted—oh? Defending some one? Why, certainly not! And how long this paragraph is growing! Yes, I feel sure Clara Blatherwick repudiated these advances as she should, and that Bransfield, being fully under "control," did not—why, of course not, as you say!

But I am going no further with the matter now, except to say that in something like an hour Mr. Arndson departed much perturbed by the prospect of the narrowness of his happiness, fully convinced of his worthlessness, and quaking uncertainty as to many things, but most of all, just then, as to his clothes!

"This man Bransfield," said he to himself, "seems to have been a good deal of a dupe, and Elizabeth—the darling!—will expect me to be fully up to vogue in this regard—as she will be in all things. And I don't believe a thing has been done about clothes."

Meantime, Mrs. de Chire walked up and down in a locked chamber, struggling with her grief.

"Oh, it is hopeless, hopeless!" said the poor girl to herself, over and over again. "Florian, my darling Florian, whom I found blind and wandering in the wilderness, and took him by the hand and guided him to the light—Florian has gone from me! She has taken him, just as she took him before. But the man she thinks loves her—her Eugene—I'm sure he's coming to love me, and to be freed of her! And I could keep him Bransfield, if I chose—if I chose! I wonder—I wonder if it would be wrong? What would she do if she had my power? Twice I had to try, before I could restore him—I could! I could!"

[To be continued]

The Occultation of Florian Amidon

BY HERBERT QUICK

SUMMER.—The previous instalments relate how Florian Amidon, leader in a small Wisconsin city, starts on a short journey in June, 1893, leaves the town at a junction and leaves nothing more until he awakes in a sleeping-car approaching New York city in February, 1900. He discovers that he has the clothes and other effects of a Eugene Brassfield, old Dealer, of Belleville, Pennsylvania. To add to the dilemma, in Amidon's pockets are two letters signed "Elizabeth Walden." In New York two "occultists," Miss Clara de Claire and her father, Professor Blotterbach, receive Amidon in the Brassfield consciousness and find out much about the old man. Amidon meets an old friend, Judge Blodgett, who goes to Belleville to make further investigations. Amidon follows, accompanied by the occultists, and meets Elizabeth, to whom it appears Brassfield was engaged, at the station. He afterwards calls on the girl, who is full of plans for her future home, but he manages to keep her in ignorance of the situation. Amidon discovers that Brassfield, while a prosperous and capable business man, is not one of the first caliber. Although engaged, he had flirted the previous summer with a Miss Scarlett, who is now in Belleville on a visit. This troubles Amidon, who is to the end of inner. But Brassfield is popular in the town and is a prominent member of a secret society—the Ancient Order of Christian Mystics. Amidon's difficulties in taking up Brassfield's business may be imagined, and sometimes he has to be put into the Brassfield consciousness by the occultists in order to strengthen things out. The real Amidon feels in love with Elizabeth, which fact greatly disturbs Miss de Claire, who has conceived a passion for the young man herself. She notes that while in the Brassfield consciousness Amidon apparently makes love to her, and she plans a scheme to keep him in this state.

XVI

THE "STRAWBERRY FIELDS."

The year will all be summer weather,
When speech and action go together;
When America's sage words are met
In all her deeds with Nocturne.
And if fair Daphne's words be true,
Look not too soon her crown to be.
The year will all be summer weather,
When speech and action go together.

—Song from the *Blotterbach of M.*



MISS DAISY SCARLETT, sitting on a piano-stool, with one foot curled up under her, was entertaining Dr. Julia Brown and Miss Flossie Smith, who had called upon her at the home of Major Parsimony, her uncle. Miss Scarlett was well and cheerfully known in Belleville, where she visited often, and was generally esteemed for her many good qualities of

heart and mind, and for the brilliant variety of her contributions to the conversations of a not overpathological social circle. Her entertainment in this instance consisted in readings from a certain book which must be regarded as an early literary impudence of a most estimable writer. The particular selection rendered by Miss Scarlett was the one (unknown, I presume, to my readers—no, dear, we haven't it) which informs us what the first person singular feminine, being invited into paradise, would do if the third person singular masculine, down in the regions infernal, should open his beautiful arms and smile. Miss Scarlett read the sentiments very well, and Miss Smith laid violent hands on her; she and looked shocked.

"Oh, Daisy!" she exclaimed, "don't, please don't!"

"Oh, Flossie!" said Miss Daisy, irritably, "don't pretend! That poem is simply great."

Doctor Brown laughed, quite after the

manner of the bass violin in the comic opera.

"The dissecting-table," said she, "brings all these beautiful areas and browns to the same dead level of those—unpoetical, but real."

Miss Scarlett floated her feet, spun about, and dashed into a stormy prelude, modulating into the accompaniment to the refrain of Sullivan's "Once Again," which she sang with much fervor.

She was about the height of a well-grown girl of twelve or thirteen, and had appealing eyes of delf-blue, and a round face of peachy softness. Her hair was undeniably red, of a shade which put to shame such verbal effigations as "saffron" or "golden," and was of tropic luxuriance and anarchistic disposition. It was curled and uncured and strayed all about her brow and neck like an explosion of spun lava. For the rest, had she really been a little girl of twelve, one would feel free to describe her as fat and roly-poly; but in the case of a young spinster of somewhere in her third decade, well groomed and stayed and otherwise in physical subjection to the modiste, and singing of love like a diva, what can one say? No more than this, perhaps, that the fortunate man who carries her off the field a prize, will realize before he has got very far that he has captured something.

"Love, once again, meet me once again!
Old love is waking; shall it wake to more?"

Thus sang Miss Scarlett, ending with a fervid cadenza. Then she turned about, sitting with her feet very wide, and faced Doctor Brown.

"Dissecting-table, indeed!" she burst forth. "I tell you, it's blasphemy to speak of making such use of a nice man! But, if I could pick 'em out, so as to be sure the right ones were dissected, I don't know but I'd agree."

Florence bristled and that some of them ought to be put to some use; and Doctor Brown, having reminded the company of her profession, merely laughed again.

"Here I am, down from Alentour," Miss Scarlett proceeded, "on purpose to be stayed with fluges and comforted with apples, as I have been here in the past. I wanted to have a good sort of familiarization with the nice boys here, and I've had to stay—I don't know how long—on a

famine diet of women and girls. It makes me wending mad!"

"I like that!" said Florence. "I really like that!"

"Well, I don't," Miss Scarlett went on. "I'm not used to it. To be left alone—oh, of course Billy Cox has been trying to butt in, but what good is he? My Hercules, my Roman Antony, who won my trusting heart last summer, at a time when I had just got it back from what I had thought a final and total loss—I find him away, and when he gets back, because, smooth, he happens to be really engaged, he's so wrapped up in a little thing like that, that he might as well have stayed in New York. He doesn't respond when I ring up his office on the telephone; he doesn't see me on the street—he seems scared. I've a good mind to give him something to be scared about!"

"Your condition," said the doctor, "is verging upon the pathological."

"I don't know what path it's verging on," was the reply, "but it isn't the primitive of dullness. There's some mystery in it."

"Go to Miss. What's-her-Name down at the hotel," said Florence. "She has solved almost all the mysteries we used to have—for a consideration. And she is said to have superior facilities for observing this Great Hensfield Mystery of yours."

"I must!" replied Miss Scarlett, looking out of the window. "There's Billy Cox just going into his house! What a pity for a bachelor to have such a big house all to himself—he has filled me with sighs for the past week, that thought! Oh, girls, I've noticed! Let's call him over and have him take us down to him—Central! Give me 423, please—in this car, Billy? This is Debra. Don't you want to do something for me?—Oh, you better, now? We want you to take us somewhere downtown, so don't take off your coat. We'll explain when you come over. Good-by!"

"Well, if all things!" exclaimed Florence. "I don't care about Mr. Cox, nor his big house! And the doctor and I have just started—"

"Oh, my, can't you," said the doctor, "but that won't break Debra's heart, she didn't expect we would, did she?"

"Well, I shall be sure not to hurt you with us, of course," said Miss Scarlett.

"Hurry, hurry—go, best would take Debra

to slip away before Billy comes in, so as to leave him to me? I may be able to make something of Billy, if I'm allowed to have my way with him. Must you go? So glad you called. Of course, we shall meet at our reception? Good-by!"

Mrs. de Claire looked anxiously down upon Miss Scarlett. The bright-haired one was questioning her concerning her mystic art.

Could she see into the future?

Sometimes, when the conditions were right.

Could she read thoughts?

Let the lady judge, upon the statements that two men, one with brown and the other with gray eyes, had been much in the lady's thoughts lately.

Marvelous! And could she tell what her thoughts in that connection had been? Well, never mind about that! Did she know about palmistry? And could she really put people under her influence so that they must do as she willed? How nice that must be! And would she and the professor come up to the Pansophers' reception and arrange to give a program of occult feats for the entertainment of the guests?

Surely, that was a part of their profession.

During these negotiations Mr. Cox waited outside, and Florian Amidon, meeting him in the lobby and being accosted as "Gene," stopped for a talk, fearing to slight some dear but unknown friend. The word "Gene" was becoming a sort of round shot across the bows in his Bellacosa cruises. The party (consisting with and under) he cut as short as possible, and passing on, started up the stairs.

Halfway up, there was a broad landing, and as Florian turned upon this, he saw at the head of the flight the blast-burner of hair, the striking hat and the pleasantly rounded figure of Clara's visitor—a person to him quite unknown. Fair, however, seemed to have in store for him an extraordinary introduction, for instantly he was aware of the descent upon him of a fiery comet of femininity. The lady seemed to be falling downstairs. With a little cry, she descended, partly flying, partly falling, partly sliding down the banister—a whirl of superabundant hair, swirling skirts, and wide, appealing eyes of delft-blue. Amidon

caught her in his arms, and sought to place her gently on her feet; but in the past chance and accident of the encounter, her arms had fallen about his neck, and she hung upon him in something quite like a hug.

"Oh! oh!" said she, "the idea of your flying to me like that! But it's nice of you!"

Amidon bowed distantly.

"I am very glad," said he, "to have been of any service, even at the risk of seeming familiarity, in saving you from a fall. I hope you will pardon me, a stranger, for so far—"

"A stranger?" she ejaculated; "oh, heavens! Leave me, 'Gene! Go away!"

The "Go away" was pronounced as Mr. Cox appeared at the foot of the stairs. Amidon passed on, now fully aware of having committed a *faux pas*. Looking back, he saw Miss Scarlett leaning against a newel-post as if in agitation, saw Mr. Cox come up and bend her down, and as she disappeared, leaning weakly on her escort's arm, the mop of rumpled hair faded from his sight like a smoking fire-ship. Who could she be? Suddenly Amidon's whispered caution flashed upon his mind, and he knew that he had encountered, embraced and repudiated the Strawberry Blonde. He paused for a moment to think over the situation—considerations of policy were coming more and more to appeal to him as guides, and he found himself feeling volpine and furtive. But here, thought he, would it not really have been best to temporize with the situation, and not to have terminated all relations with Miss Scarlett in this public way? Would it not—

Then rolled over his heart the consciousness of the manifold glories of his Elizabeth's womanhood. Temporize with another woman? The very thought repelled him. He involuntarily brushed his eyes where it had supported and sustained Miss Scarlett. He felt a sense of unworthiness in having, even of necessity and for a proper purpose, embraced the other girl. Looking up, he saw Judge Blodgett regarding him like a portly accusing angel from the head of the stairway. He made a hint at assisting Amidon in brushing his coat.

"Those red ones," said he, "are the very devil for showing on black! I'd marry a white-brown, if I were you!"

"Blodgett," said Amidon, "I don't care

to be chaffed about an accident of that sort."

"Oh, certainly not!" said the judge. "But pick off the ringlets all the same. And say, Florian, of course, I don't count, but there was another fellow at the last of the strain, the junior in the firm of Fuller & Cox, my fellow-practitioner; and in accidents of this sort one sometimes does as much damage as a regular cloud of witnesses."

Anson moved as in disgust. And the poor faithful fellow, that his spiritual tone might be restored, sat down and read once more his *Wife*, the letter superscribed in the large, scrawly hand, "To Be Read En Route."

XVII

SOFT ALTERNATIVES IN THE CYCLANT

One made himself a name for skill to save
In its last holding-place.

Each error Mother Earth engaged to
Sift.

Oh jungle, sea, or cave

No path so desolate but he mastered it!

And, lit by his,

From off the face of Mystery he tore

The veil the world

Then, turning around all his skill to saving,

To solve the knot of Being.

In the deep crypts of Self freedom he lay,

Quite and alone

—*delirium in Egypt*

Every morning, now, a box of flowers went up to Elizabeth, at the house with the white columns, and every evening Mr. Anson bravely followed. The terror he felt of women was now overpowered by the greater terror of losing this woman, and the fortitude and resolution he possessed in all other fields of action were returning to him. His rapiers and carabines she always wore for him, and all the roses except the red ones, which she put in vases and kept near her, but did not wear. She was infinitely kind and sweet, in a high and pure and far-off way fit for Olympus, but all the infamous little coquetries and tricks of charm with which she had at first received and disconcerted him were gone. She talked to him in that low voice of hers; but often he sat silent, her hands busy with some work, and seemed to desire him to talk to her.

Since that first night, he could not bring himself to act a part, further than to av-

sume the name and place of Eugene Bransfield. He stood afar off, looked at his disunity and worshiped. He read to her her favorite books, and ventured somewhat, out of his exceptional knowledge, to expound them—whereat she looked away and listened with something of the astonishment with which she had received his disquisitions on poetry and art on that first unlucky evening. For the most part, however, he, too, was inclined to silence, in which he looked at Elizabeth and longed for her love. The love she had given to Bransfield seemed to him based on the deceitful pretensions of that wretch, and in any case it was not his, and he felt repelled from accepting it. He yearned to show her the soul of Florian Anson, purified, adorned, and dedicated to her.

Once or twice she had hinted at something faithful which she wanted to say to him, but he had begged her to wait. After a few days of this dutiful devotion of his, she seemed less aloof, not quite so much the unsuitable goddess.

She gave him her hand, as usual, one evening at parting.

"I shall not expect to see you to-morrow," said she, "until we meet at the Paraphrase's reception. Until then, good-by."

"I thought," said he, "that if you would permit, I should like to call in the afternoon—say at three or four. May I?"

He looked so gleefully at her, holding the little hand in both of his, that it is no wonder her color rose. It was like the worshipful inception of a new courtship.

"I shall be invisible," said she, "all day—so you must wait."

"It is hard to wait," he answered, "when you are so near."

"I will try to make amends," said she, "by endeavoring to be as beautiful as—you used to de-ceive me—at the reception. Good night!"

He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. To have done more he felt, would have spoiled all. She went in, more nearly happy than at any time since his return, but sadly puzzled. "I shall never understand her," he thought.

Mrs. Major Pamphrey, standing in line with Miss Scribble and Mr. Pamphrey's order from Wiggins, a procession of people coming in by twos and threes, and sneered at attendants into some for doffing

wraps; a chain of bejewelled Roman beads circulating past the receiving line and listening to Mrs. Pumphrey's assurances that she was delighted to welcome them that she might have the pleasure of introducing them to her slave—and, of course, they knew Miss Scarlett, an Italian harpist who played *consciously* among palms, a

from his divinity a little, uncertain pressure of the hand. Then came his respects to Mrs. Pumphrey. Amidon started as he recognized in the height-haired second person in line his lady of the banisters.

"So delighted to see you here, Mr. Brausfield!" said Mrs. Pumphrey. "It gives me the opportunity of presenting you



Illustration by J. M. W. Turner

INSTANTLY HE WAS AWARE OF THE BEAUTY OF HIS LADY
OF A FIRST COURT OF FIDELITY

punch bowl provided over by Florida Smith and Mrs. Alford, a refuge of black coats, pretty cheeks and white arms and shoulders; a glare of lights; a hum like a hive's—in short, a reception. Such was the function to which Florian made his way, waiting until he could arrive concomitantly with the Waldron carriage, so that he might hand the ladies therefrom and receive

in—why, Daisy, where's your auntie gone? She was here just now!"

"She was called away for a few moments," said Miss Scarlett. "Yes, I believe Mr. Brausfield and I have met"—this with an icy bow—"and please, Mr. Cox, don't go, until I have told you the end of the story!" And she went on cheerily, chatting to Billy Cox, who had

measured himself as close to her as the tide of guests sweeping by her would permit. Which current swept Mr. Ansdon onward as he was in the act of asserting his hostsess of his sense of loss in her sister's absence—and an eddy left him in a quiet corner, where he found absorbing occupation in trying to imagine again as vividly as possible that pressure of the hand. Was it meant as an evidence of affection?—or did her foot slip, so that she clung to his hand to prevent a fall?

This question seemed of the most transcendental importance to him, and he debated it mentally all the evening, as he talked the set conversation of such an occasion. He knew no one, but everyone knew him; yet he had no difficulty in getting on, because there was no sense in any of the conversation. Bright eyes flashed meaning and scintillating glances into his, as sweet lips said things which he could answer quite as well as if the content of the conversation had been as familiar to him as it was supposed to be. Pleistades, generalities, incidents, and incidents, pleistades and generalities in reply. Ansdon looked the part of Hensfield perfectly, and on occasions of this sort, to look the part is quite enough.

He found Elizabeth again, surrounded by a circle of admirers—men and women—an oasis of intelligence, it seemed to him as he listened, in a desert of twaddle. She smiled at him with her eyes, as he looked at her through the press, and just as he had won to a place by her side the tide was now flooding into a large room where, it was announced, Professor Blakewick and Mme. le Claire were doing feats of oratoricalism.

"Ladies and gentlemen"—it was the professor who spoke—"you are at liberty, of course, to adopt any theory which seems to you best to explain these phenomena. Mme. le Claire offers none. When she has introduced to phenomena, she has—she will not. It does seem to you to be the work of unexplicated spirits, few well—poor! Sometimes it seems so to her. If you regard her phenomena as a sufficient working hypothesis, (p. her phenomena) give, and upon that hypothesis we will proceed to work the miracles and the public. It is no little the same to Mme. le Claire. It is only fair to say, however, that she has never yet detected herself in any fraud. Had she offered

no explanation, she must give due credit for your consternation."

A ripple of laughter and a burst of interrupted comment ran through the room.

"But how was it possible for her to get her hands loose?" said one.

"I assure you," said Mrs. Meyers, one of the "Paradise" impressionists—"I assure you that what she told me was unknown not only to everyone else, but to me also, but it turned out true. It's accuracy!"

"It's haunting," said the bass voice of Doctor Brown, "and until you show me the source of this 'occult' energy, I shall be content. Animal magnetism and slight-of-hand! What do you think, Mrs. Hunter?"

Ansdon looked across and saw—Mrs. Hunter, of Hensfield! It was she and her daughter from whom he had hastily flown to the buffet just before he alighted from the train at Elm Springs Junction. Could it be possible?

"Do you know the lady talking with Doctor Brown?" he asked of Miss Waldron.

"Mrs. Hunter?" and Elizabeth, questioning. "Why, didn't you meet her when you came in? She is Mrs. Humphrey's sister, of Hensfield, Wisconsin. She travels with Mrs. Humphrey to-night."

"I thought it was Mrs. Hunter as soon as I saw her," answered Ansdon; "she is an old acquaintance of mine."

And it was some little time, so far had he forgotten his peculiar position, before the latent possibilities of this innocent and truthful remark occurred to him. When he thought of it, any observing friend might well have inspired after his health, so gray with pallor and meek with count had his face become. Not that he felt hanging over him any such danger as he had feared when he found himself in the dress of another man, with that other man unaccounted for. He really cared very little about that, now. The people of Belleville, and Hensfield, too, might think what they pleased about this mystery of disappearance and reappearance; he was not proud of them all, and those he really cared about would understand.

But Elizabeth! Everything now revolved about her. Now that she had agreed so dear—that she had come to settle upon him in his new character—how could he let her know that this Eugene Hensfield whom she so admired and loved

was no moon known; and that Florian Amidon had never seen her, never loved her, never wooed her until these past few days! Would she ever see him again? Could she regard him as anything else than an impostor and an impostor? His right to Brasfield's clothes and Brasfield's fortune might be as clear as Judge Blodgett said; but would not Elizabeth feel that as to her he had attempted the very deed of which he had first suspected himself—fraud and robbery? And her "perfect lover," whom Amidon habitually thought of as "that fellow Brasfield"—all the perfections which Elizabeth had learned to attribute to him would no longer be credited to Amidon. It was tragic!

As a matter of fact, beloved, any man would have been a perfect lover, or none at all, to Elizabeth. A perfect lover is the noblest work of woman.

"To audience," went on the professor, "will had its extreme journey to assist in a demonstration of *Muscle Chair's* power as a hypnotist. Now all very can gas be hypnotized to sleep down; had we will try. Will be audience witness and host in name of a lady or gentleman as a suspect?"

"Doctor Brown!" said many voices. "Aha!" said others. But most of the notes appeared to be for Brasfield—a name which the professor hailed joyfully as meaning against failure. It is not often that the audience will sit upon the only practical condition in the room.

"Mr. Brasfield will greatly assist by going forward," said he; and, as he had learned to do, Amidon obeyed the professor's request.

Elizabeth, standing near Mrs. Hunter, heard an agitated exclamation from that lady as Mr. Amidon went forward.

"For heaven's sake," said she, "it's Florian Amidon!"

"What?" inquired Mrs. Pumphrey—



Drawn by Owen Leavelle

JUDGE BLODGETT . . . MADE A POINT AT AMIDON
AMIDON IN HIS WIFE'S DRESS

"that? Why, that's our chief citizen, Mr. Eugene Brasfield."

Elizabeth heard no more, but in spite of perplexity at what she regarded as Mrs. Hunter's recognition of her lover's face and forgetfulness of his name, she could not help noticing Mrs. Hunter's excited talk to her sister, and the meaning glances finally directed toward her, Elizabeth. Whereat, to hide a little rose blush, Miss Waldron turned more completely toward the place of the hypnotist.

Mme. le Claire stood in the rustained alcove, empty save for the great tiger-skin rug, the dais, and a chair or two. She was gowned more than in the yellow and black, and stood in tigrine splendour cap-d'opie. Amidon felt her old power over him, as he approached her and looked into those mysterious eyes, and knew that he should do her bidding. She looked at his troubled countenance, and pitied him for his long evening of mental strain. She had seen his devotion to Elizabeth, and, he it confessed, was jealous in spite of herself. Pity and jealousy inspired the plan which now for the first time formed in her mind: she would rescue Eugene Bransfield to this company in which he was so completely at home, and lay the troubled ghost, *Amidon*.

She bowed deeply, and waved him to the chair. Then she performed the charm of "seven paces and of waving arms," and he slept, "lost to life and use and name and fame."

"When he opens his eyes," said she, "he will know nothing, think nothing, do nothing, except what I suggest."

"Make him dance with the bravest!" suggested Cos.

"Give him this," said Alford, offering a coin, "and make him think it's hot. People in this neighborhood would go farther to see Bransfield drop a piece of money than to interview a live dinosaur!"

The laughter at this rally was lost on Mme. le Claire. She was looking down upon the unconscious Amidon, and wondering how anyone could think of making him the instrument of buffoonery.

"I will perform only one sleight, yet very difficult, best," said she. "This gentleman will soon wake as Mr. Bransfield, and will be his old and usual self among you until a certain hour, which I will write on this card, and seal up in this envelope, so that no one will know, and inform Mr. Bransfield by suggestion. When that particular moment arrives, wherever he may be, whatever he may be doing, he will enter the cabaret-door. The seal is regarded as a severe and perfect one. The card will remain in the possession of Major Pumphrey until it second-order fails, and the envelope will then be opened."

Kneeling upon the dais, she uttered whispering in the subject's ear. Then,

tapping his wrist, she said, *decisively*, "Wake!"

It was Eugene Bransfield who opened his eyes upon a circle of his friends, associates and cronies. He rose lightly and confidently, and laughed at the chaffing of his friends. He bowed low to Mme. le Claire, and moved across the room to Elizabeth's side, with an air of incipient proprietorship.

"No true lover of carnations," he confided to her, "could wish you to wear them as you do to-night."

"Really?" she queried. "I suppose I ought to ask why?"

"It isn't fair to the flowers," said he. "Flowers have rights, you know; and to be outdone in sweetness— Ah, Jim! Go away, and don't bother me! Don't you see I'm very busy?"

"Old man," said Alford, answering to the name of "Jim," "it's good to see you as you are to-night—your old self."

Self-possessed, masterful, Mr. Bransfield moved through the assembly like a conqueror. Those who, a short time ago, found him dull and moody, perceived now in his confident portledge, pitched safely in the neutral key of mediocrity, his possessed writh of a species of brilliancy, like the skillful playing of scales. Elizabeth noted the return of that dash and abandon which she had lately so missed—but for the first time the Bransfield music had a hollow ring in her ears. The earlier melody of last night—after all, it was best!

Mme. le Claire, immensely popular, gave readings in palmistry. Miss Smith was to have a husband with dark eyes. Mr. Bransfield offered to cross her palm with any gold coin she might name, if she would promise him a sweetheart with parti-colored eyes, who would meet him for a long talk next day. Mme. le Claire blushed and dropped the hand.

Mr. Bransfield admiringly overtook Mrs. Scarlett, who seemed endeavoring to retreat. He stood by her, chatting lightly, using two voices—a distinct and conversational tone, and one so low as to be for her ear alone.

"Oh, isn't it a crush?" said he. "(*Deine, meine die meisten?*) A perfect evening, though. (Her new running away from me?) And such delightful people! (The rest goes in ten minutes, is it yes?)"

Mrs. Scarlett nodded, and Bransfield



WAITING UNTIL HE COULD ARRIVE CONCOMITANTLY WITH THE WALLBOY'S CARRIAGE

ressed on. Mrs. Pumphrey, Mrs. Hunter and Elizabeth Walton were among punch.

"May I have some?" said he. "And, please, Mrs. Pumphrey, may I be presented to the guests of the evening?"

Mrs. Hunter received the introduction with a gasp.

"Is it possible," said she, "that you don't know me? Can the possessor of that voice and face be anyone but Florian Arvidson?"

"Arvidson, Arvidson?" he repeated. "Pardon me, but some one else spoke that name to me lately, and I was trying to recall the circumstances. It is in every way on my part to be regretted, as the fact has deprived me of the happiness of knowing you, that I am not Mr. Arvidson. Am I so like him?"

"Oh, it isn't a matter of resemblance, but of identity!" replied Mrs. Hunter. "Were you never in Haverham, Wisconsin?"

"Never," said Mr. Brasfield, "but I am beginning to see its beauties as a place of residence. And I hope to know more of this other Denmark before the evening is past."

Mrs. Hunter bowed in acknowledgment of the compliments, and Mr. Brasfield took himself gracefully from their presence. In the fashion of one pressed for time, he moved on.

Elizabeth had grown suddenly very grave. What did this conduct of her lover mean? A little while ago he had recognized Mrs. Hunter, at a distance, as an old acquaintance. Now he had suddenly outlived her, and denied that he ever knew her! Could this be the man she had trusted with her all? These transformations of character, these contradictions, and now this lie. She must think it over: it impressed her, and she must act.

"Arvidson," said she, "let us go."

As down the stairway they came, asked for departure, they were conscious of a hymn of excitement surging through the assembly.

"Where is he? The envelope has been opened and the name is up! Where is he?" were the cries. "It's eleven o'clock! a minute past eleven! Where's Mr. Brasfield?"

At this moment, a scream, a sobbing scream, high, long drawn and piercing,

the scream of a woman in terror, came echoing from the deserted east room. A body of guests rushed through the corridors, Miss In Claire, pale with fright, at their head, and Elizabeth borne with them, all looking to see what violence had provoked that scream. They saw Mr. Brasfield, seated on a sofa in a shadowy corner, holding both Miss Scarlett's hands in his; saw the girl frantically but in vain trying to take them from his grasp. He sat like a statue, with his eyes set wide and un-winking like a corpse's, every limb and muscle rigid, his body as tense and immovable as a stone image.

Miss In Claire leaped forward like a tigress, as light was her step, and passed her hand over his eyes, so as to close them. Then, bending her face one moment piercingly upon his face, she sharply tapped his wrist and uttered the single word, "Wake!"

Florian Arvidson opened his eyes. He saw that something extraordinary was taking place, for, in the act of opening his eyes, he had seen Miss Scarlett fall back into the arms of Mr. Cox.

"It is now," said the professor, "ten minute past eleven. To test, you will admit, have given a complete success. His misjudgment will be raised as establishing to a certain extent an important principle, and have given in every way brilliant and a successful result!"

A laugh or two was heard, then more laughter, then a little burst of reviving talk, and one could observe that the affair was to be passed off as one of the mysteries of sensation.

"Well," said Mr. Arvidson, "if I have contributed my share to the gaiety of the occasion, I shall beg now to be permitted to depart."

The waiters were waiting for their carriage as he came down.

"There will be plenty of assistance," said the wait, "and we shall not need to detain you."

"Oh, arvidson, arvidson!" wept Elizabeth, when they were safely alone, "there was a spell upon him, as you say, there in the east room, but the spell that took him there was none of the hypnotist's working! I am ashamed, and humiliated, and rebuked of all I have to live for! He was there, arvidson, of his own accord, and left me!"

(To be concluded)

The Occultation of Florian Amidon

BY HERBERT QUICK

XVIII

A REVIVAL OF BELSHAZZAR

My are but Sages at the Table, Guests,
Whom each drinks more, the more that he
protests;

See, One by One, his Fellows slip from
sight.

And then himself beneath the Table rests

Some with the quonon Creek for Text, and
Some

Judas by the thrilling Fallows of the
Thorn—

But lo! the Fowl continues till the Guests
Are changed to Fowl of Tarns as in they
come!

—Invitations of Immortality.



MEASERS, BULLWINKLE AND COX were absent when the time came for sitting down to supper, and Mr. Simpson, the Master of the Revels, decreed that no one was to be waited for. So the chairs of the absentees were shoved up, and reminded Mr. Slater, who was quite high in spirits, of "The Vacant Chair," which he sang to the bass of Judge Blodgett, and a humming accompaniment by Alford and Edgington. Professor Blatherwick was much affected.

"Dis is Bledberg and stament says," said he. "Strong and bugging hearts, and veek betw and stanchard! Oh, is events and stoking and songs and scraps! It is broodwife of tears and scholastic!"

"Especially strikes," said Mr. Simpson. "Gentlemen, a good time to all!"

Now, after some courses of soup and fish and cranberries, Mr. Alford noted the unconsumed places at the plates of Bullwinkle and Cox, and with a sense of equity truly Anglo-Saxon, he raised the point of the injustice to those who had been present, of having these two fresh competitors come in late in the middle of the feast.

"Point seems to me to be well taken," said Judge Blodgett. "I move your honor that the wet goods apportionable to our absent friends be set aside for them."

"Sustained!" roared Simpson. And this was done. Mr. Bullwinkle, fat, bald and rubicund, soon made his appearance.

In the course of the meal, Edgington filled a gap by charging that Cox was absent because of his having recently taken passage upon the water-wagon, and was temporarily staying away. Alford proposed that a messenger be sent for him, and when the A. B. T. boy came, a written summons was penned upon a menu-card, upon which progress to date was checked, and instructions given that the document be presented to Cox at his home every twenty minutes until he came—Cox to pay the charges; and the messenger to return between trips to report, and to have the menu checked up so that Cox might note the forward movement of events, and see how far he was behind.

When Mr. Simpson rose to make a few general observations touching in that part of the programme usually devoted to speech-making, Mr. Bullwinkle took him for the tardy Cox and some friend whom Cox had brought, and greeted them with a strident "How de do!" After this manner, of course, Mr. Bullwinkle was logically bound to show that the exclamation was uttered by virtue of a deliberate plan, and so he repeated it from time to time all the evening, until the ordinal to which his late arrival had subjected him proved too much for his endurance. But this is anticipating.

A dozen matches were burning and a dozen Hottentots sending forth their first cloudbursts of blue, as Mr. Simpson began his remarks.

"To most of those present," he said. "I don't need to say that this is a sort of annual affair. To our new friends I will explain that this club is an institution of Bellevue Lodge, Number 449, of the Ancient Order of Christian Nurses, of which noble

fraternity we are devoted members. Present company are members, ex- or incumbent, of the Board of Control, and a system of fines for absence-at board-meetings accumulates a fund which has to be spent, and we are now engaged in spending it. Beyond the logs of the stammon which points queerly in the blowing in of that devil, the impending happy event in the life of our treasurer, Brother Brausfield, renders it fitting that this banquet be in his honor. What the devil is that racket? Oh, the boy——! Let the wandering outfall enter: What says the secretist insider of our Mystic Circle?"

"He said he'd have me arrested if I came there any more, and the whole bunch jailed," said the boy. "And he checked the paper out of the window."

"Let another scroll be prepared," roared Simpson, "and go back to him as per schedule."

"But," said the boy, "he said——"

"We hold the police force in the hollow of our hands!" shouted Simpson. "And we will protect you."

"I should say we would!" "You trust us!" "To the death!" chorused the resturers.

"I'll collect damages from him for your death!" said Judge Blodgett. "Whom do you want 'em paid to?"

"Divide the booty," said the boy, "among my grandchildren—steadily. Do I go back?"

"You do," said Simpson, "as soon as another Exhibit A is prepared."

"It's ready, most noble Potentate," said Edgington, ritually-ritually.

"Then let the messenger depart. Where's that mess I had? Hang it, you've used it for the first, and it had my remarks on it. As I was saying, this is Brausfield's night. Everybody tells a story, sings a song or daries."

Edgington told a long story—which, he said, was "on Brausfield," and showed what a regular devil that gentleman had been. It seemed that he and "Beau" were at one time fly-fishing in the mountains, and Eugene had so wrought upon the fancy of the schoolmistress that she had let school out at three, and gone to learn casting of Brausfield.

"And when they came to the house at supper time," he went on, "the whole family were laying for them. 'Aren't any thin'?"

said the old lady—"anythin' more'n a bull-head?" "I c'n see," said the hired man, "that she's been castin' party hard, by the way her dress is kinder pressed around the waist. It aches from wearin' that way!"

And so on, to the narration of the over-break of hostilities with the hired man, and the flight of Brausfield and Edgington. At every point Amidon winced, as he got views of Brausfield's character which hypnosis could not yield, and the assembly raised the leader at his embarrassment.

The messenger-boy returned again by this time, still unsuccessful, and was provided with a bunch of custom firecrackers to be exploded in Coe's front yard so that the invitation to the banquet might not be overlooked. Then Slater told of Mr. Brausfield's adventures at the Mardi Gras, the story consisting mostly of the account of Eugene's wonderful series of winnings at the race-course, where he adopted the system of always finding what horse was given longest odds, and playing him.

Amidon was unable to tell as to the absolute truth of these tales, but they had such verisimilitude that they impressed and shocked him. He was doubly astounded at the evident enjoyment with which they were received by his friends, and especially at the fact of the hearty and unrestrained manner in which Blodgett and even Blatherwick joined in the applause. His face burned with shame. How had Elizabeth Waldron ever cared for such a man as that villain Brausfield? He must somehow, some time, find a way to tell her that it was Brausfield, not Amidon, who had done these things, and that he, Amidon, rescued by a doting mother and cared for by a solicitous sister, and all his life the model of the moral town of Hamletown, was an innocent of these things as she was.

These thoughts so filled his mind that he heard very little of Judge Hodgson's diabolical story. Professor Blatherwick began a German song full of trifled r's, ach's and heck's, but became offended at Bullockville's accident "How de der?" at the end of the first stanza, and quit.

Mr. Simpson now called upon Mr. Knaggs to do a dance, as he alleged himself unable to do anything else. Mr. Knaggs responded, and did pretty well considering the laziness of the hour, but insisted that he ought to have a better surface than the carpet. Amidon duly resented as an

impropriety Mr. Knaggs's brilliant proof of the correctness of his position regarding the corpse, by a unanimously successful clog-dance among the dishes on the table.

By this time, it being past the hour for retiring, according to the habit of most, several of the guests were asleep, and most of the rest were indulging in monologues under the impression that they were conversing with their neighbors. No wonder, therefore, that the A. D. T. boy rapped long and was not heard. No wonder that the ultimate opening of the door was unnoticed by these persons, or that no one observed the tall man with whisker extensions to a man-tache naturally too large, who came in after the messenger. Observed or not, however, he arrived.

"Brassfield, a summons for you," said he, severely. "Here's the copy, this is the 'original. Wawwhe readin', I s'pose. Sorry to interrupt. So long."

Amadon looked at the stiff document as if it had been a Gila monster on toast. He saw such words as "State of Pennsylvania, County of Rockill, ss," and "Default will be taken against you, and judgment rendered thereon," and sundry dates and figures. Indistinctly he turned to Judge Hodggen, saying:

"What's this, Hodggen?"

A tremor of panic seized upon Amadon, and a wave of sobriety passed over the guests. Much the same thing must have marked the breaking up of the feast of Bulshannar. The robbers gazed at the paper, or began their preparations for departure.

"What is it?" asked Amadon.

"I don't know enough about this practice here," said the judge, slowly, "to be able to say whether it's good or not—seems to have been hastily and rather slovenly got up."

"But what is the damned thing!" shouted Alvord; "cut it short and tell us!"

"Seems perfectly regular, though," went on the judge. "It's a summons in the case of Daisy Scarlett vs. Eugene Brassfield in a suit for twenty-five thousand dollars for breach of promise of marriage."

Amadon sunk back in a collapse which was almost a faint. The lady nervous Alvord rose to command.

"Now," said he, standing in his place, "I want to say a few words before a man leaves this room. I know something of this

case, and I want you to take my word that there's no more foundation for it than there would be if it was brought against any one of us. And furthermore, there must be nothing said about this. These papers are not of record yet, and I believe something can be done. Every man must pledge me his word that he won't breathe a word of this, and will deny it if asked about it."

"We promise!" came in unison from the company.

Alvord walked toward the guest of honor, tripping over the legs of Bulshannar as he went, and offered his hand to Amadon.

"I say, old man," said Alvord, "I warned you that you were carrying on a little strong; and now here's a——"

"How do do?" said Bulshannar.

XIX

THE MOVING FINGER WRITES

To the Queen came the guard full of mail.

Hailed in bonds the Perimeter.

"Shall it be noise or least, rush or wheel?"

But her proud face grew tender.

Down she stepped from her throne—made him free:

"Love," she said, with a sigh,

"What is rush? You are you, we are us,
I am I!"

—*The Cheating of Zenobia*

I should like to write, just here, a little disposition on Crisis. I should show how all nature moves ever on and on toward certain cataclysmic events, each of which marks a point of departure for new events in progression. I should begin, of course, with the Nebular Hypothesis, its crash of stars, followed by the evolution of the sun and its system of planets, its life, cooling, death, and a fresh crisis forming a new orbula. I should end with either Revolutions or Malaria, depending upon whether I should last consider the subject in its relation to sociology or to pathology; but in any case, somewhere along in the latter third of the work, I should treat of Love and Marriage, and therein of the Crisis and Catastrophe in Romance. I have a good mind to do it!

But, no; crisis in general must wait, seeing that our particular one needs clamoring for solution. The concrete bids away with the abstraction. None of our friends of this history could be brought, just now, to seek solace in philosophy one moment,

unless it might be Professor Blodgett—*and he is entirely oblivious of the fact of the crisis having made its appearance.*

Not so, for instance, with Judge Blodgett, who has been busy since the banquet, some of the time with a towel about his brow, searching through Edgington's library for the law of Breach of Promise of Marriage as defined by the Pennsylvania decisions. His call on Fuller & Cox was most unsatisfactory. Mr. Fuller with some anxiety disclaiming all knowledge of any such case as *Scudell vs. Brassfield*, and Mr. Cox being invisible.

"They act," said he to Florian, "like people who are out for revenge, or vindication, or something besides money. I don't consider their attitude favorable to a compromise."

"Well," said Amidon, "that does not surprise me at all."

"It doesn't, eh?" went on the judge. "Well, I can't say that anything surprises me, though I was a little taken off my feet by a rumor that something took place between you and the plaintiff at that party the other night. How was that?"

"There may have been something," said Amidon, calmly, "but you must get particulars from some one else—Claire, perhaps. You see, she was giving tea, and put me into that—*Brassfield* state (oh, I can't understand)—and I don't know what occurred; but there was something."

"I'd like to know about that," said the judge, contemplatively. "I'd like to know. That stairway episode—that collision, you remember—may not count for much on the trial; but with a few corroborative circumstances, oh, my boy? *Furrier jury*, pretty girl, blighted affection, damned affair, you know. But say! she's got something to prove if she were, under the authorities here, and there are many cases in this state than there ought to be in the whole world; but a summer-resort engagement, girl of mature years—cheer up, Florian, we'll win, or we'll make it a great case——"

"Blodgett," answered Amidon, who heard with horror the lawyer's forecast of the trial, "she may not have to prove anything. There may not be any trial. I must know these facts! I may owe reparation. I may—anything! I *must* know; and no one but Miss de Claire can help us, and the worst act through that accused wounded who has got us into all this—*Brassfield*! Go

to her, Blodgett, and tell her that she must see us. I have asked for an interview a dozen times since that reception, but she won't see anyone. Get an interview for this afternoon; and you must be present and hear her bring out of him a full confession, not as my attorney, but as my friend, as a gentleman. If you find out the worst, as I believe you will, I shall offer——"

Judge Blodgett grasped Amidon's hand. "That's like you, Florian," he exclaimed, "and it's the part of a man! But I'd see her in Halfan first!"

"Well, I'll see the madame," he continued. "Yes—I'll see her! I'll see her at once. I guess you're right about it, Florian."

Miss de Claire, too, was keenly conscious of the converging lines of fate the meeting of which was as sick in hateful promise. She was prostrated at the result of her work at the reception. She had seen Florian in a position of utter humiliation. She had observed the gray pallor in Elizabeth's face as she walked from the room, and felt on her conscience the murder of their happiness. She had seen—and this hurt her more than she would to herself admit—she had seen Brassfield walk from a whispered conversation with herself—an anxious, waiting conversation—to a secret meeting with Daisy Scarlett, so that she felt disposed of the child she had had upon the affections of even Amidon's false second self, Brassfield. What could she do? She excluded herself and pondered. On this second day, she made her resolve: she would see Miss Walden, and if possible explain so much of the mystery as might serve to satisfy her with reference to the affair of the East Room. Accordingly, a note went up to the house with the white columns, asking for a meeting. And as the messenger departed, the card of Judge Blodgett came in.

"No!" said Miss de Claire, to his request, "no, I must be excused! If you could have seen him when last——"

"Exactly!" said the judge, filling in the pause. "And as I didn't see that reception affair, you must tell me about it."

When he had been told, the judge walked back and forth in evident perturbation, fingering over the leaves of a little square book which he took from his pocket.

"Did you ever," said he at last, "happen to hear what was the rule laid down in the breach-of-promise case of *Hill vs. Maguire*?"



From the novel

"PUT ME BACK INTO THE WORLD OF UNFORTUNE, AND LET ME KNOW THE KING THAT I AM HIS KING."

"Breach of promise!" ejaculated the young woman, inferring a volume from the one phrase. "What do you mean?"

"Those facts of which you inform me," said he, "bring Mr. Anidson's case within the rule in *Hall vs. Maguire*, square as a die! Oh, I forgot to tell you! Mr. Anidson, doing business under the name and style of Eugene Broadfield, was sued by Miss Daisy Scarlett last night, for breach of promise."

"Oh, it must be stopped!" exclaimed the occultist, "it shall be stopped! He is not guilty. He was irresponsible. Ask papa about it; he will tell you so. This girl is coming to see me here to-day. I'll tell her how wrong——"

"No, no, my dear!" said the judge, in a fatherly manner. "That would never do, never! You may have given a hint as to this matter of irresponsibility, worth considering. Promise of marriage—civil contract; abnormal state—irresponsibility: it looks pretty well! You should have been a lawyer. But this thing of having dealings with Miss Scarlett except in the presence of and through her legal advisers, Messrs. Fuller & Co.—not for a moment to be thought of by an honorable practitioner."

Miss de Claire regarded him with a lofty scorn meant for these antiquated scruples of his; but before she could find words, the knock of the bell-boy called her attention to the door.

"Miss Waldron is below?" said she. "Judge, you may bring Mr. Anidson up in half an hour. I shall then be at liberty, and may grant his request. Please leave me, now."

Elizabeth Waldron, in this period of distress, found nowhere a gleam of comfort. Her first chagrin at the thought of such things as she feared might be conceivable, as overture self-revelation to her sister in such things as letters and the sweet confessions of the new betrothal—all this was past, now. Tragedy has this of comfort in it: its lurid lightnings burn out of the atmosphere of life all the noxious latencies which have seemed sources of concern. So it was with Elizabeth, as she now faced the very annihilation of all for which she had loved—entered in that "perfect lover," who was now worse than annihilated in this device to a place which made every act of homage to her so mere and common that she would have felt his status upheld by

some proof of great guilt on his part. And she could see no way of acquitting him. There was mystery in it, but no culpation. Mystery——

With the idea of mystery came in the image of the strange girl with the fascinating glance and the parti-colored hair. Could it be possible that the occult power possessed by her might somehow furnish an explanation of her lover's strangely base behavior? More and more did this fixed thought engross her mind. She felt that she must know—must see this woman and her colorless father. Desires grew to resolve; resolve bred inquiry as to ways of compassing an interview; and in the midst of the inquiry, came Miss de Claire's messenger. Her answer was the putting on of her cloak for a visit to the occultist's parlors.

The two women faced each other like hostile champions in a truce. Elizabeth's first aversion to the other had been swept away in the flood of righteous jealousy created by the Scarlett affair. Miss de Claire's unreasoning feeling of injury had been mitigated by the same helpful effort, and her sense of justice fought for Elizabeth; but no two women loving the same man ever met without antagonism.

"I thank you," said Miss Waldron, "for this invitation. I think you owe me the benefit of such light as you can give on some—some things—which are dark to me."

A little angry flush rose to Miss de Claire's cheek at the tone in which the first part of this speech was uttered. It passed away, and was replaced by a gentler impression at the delicate and faltering conclusion.

"I owe you," she answered, "more in the way of knowledge than you imagine. I expect other visitors. Will you stop in to this little rear room? I may be called away from you for a while, but I shall return."

"I need not tell you," said Elizabeth, "how really important it is to me to know whether there was anything in your rambling influence over—Mr. Broadfield—which would cause him to do things unworthy of him—as he did. Did you impose any such thing upon him by your power? Could you have been so cruel?"

"Before I answer that," replied Clara, "there are more things to tell. When did you first meet Mr. Anidson—Broadfield, I mean?"

"Why do you call him by that name?"

cried Elizabeth. "That is what Mrs. Hunter called him! One moment he told me he knew her; the next, he denied it to her face. What is there in this matter of names?"

Mrs. le Claire looked with a fixed and unwavering calmness at Miss Wadston, and answered in a tone of perfect assurance.

"There is nothing in it which can't be easily explained. You have known Mr. Bransfield long?"

"Since I was seventeen. He did my aunt and me a great favor, which blazed us out of poverty—about some land we had, and off discoveries—I went away soon after this, but he has always been very kind and good—until—until this—"

Elizabeth walked to the window and looked out for a long time, during which Mrs. le Claire regarded her fixedly and tried not to hate her.

"Did he tell you much of his past?"

"No; he said it was a very ordinary past, and that he would tell us all about it some time; and then the subject never came up again. I never cared!"

"Let me tell it to you," said Mrs. le Claire. "He was, all his life, a man of wealth and standing. He was a scholar and a student of the finer things of art and letters. He was the pride of his town and his university. Then all at once, nearly six years ago, came upon him one of those strange experiences of which I, through my profession, am able to speak to you as one having knowledge. He became another man. His mind had drawn across it a dead line cutting off everything back of a certain date. He did not tell you of his life, because he did not remember it himself!"

Elizabeth gasped, and turned pale.

"This life of his——" she began.

"Was a life which was in every way better—which will add to your pride in him. But you must be prepared for some strange and unexpected things. Now, for instance, a name—a name seems important; but what is it? This loss of personality—of self-consciousness relating to the past—it was loss of name, of mode of life, of all memory, except certain blind, unconscious reflexes, in which the brain had no part. How the name of Bransfield was suggested to this new-born personality of his, no one can tell, he least of all. But——"

"Then his name—his name is——is not——"

New here was a situation for a diplomat. To say that Bransfield was an assumed name, an alias, was to shock this girl's womanish conservatism to its very base. Mrs. le Claire proved herself a diplomat.

"Why," said she, as if the matter were, after all, a matter of no importance, "the name of Bransfield is his, legally, Judge Hodggett says, and morally. These business names, as distinguished from others, are quite common here, I am told—take mine, for instance. Eugene Bransfield was not his name until five years ago, when this happened. He is really Florian Amidon, son of the chemist Wilford Amidon, of whom, I have no doubt, you have read."

The fact that the name of Wilford Amidon had never reached her ears, did not occur to Elizabeth. Mrs. le Claire's choice of expressions sounded like the announcement that Florian was a prince just throwing off his incognito. The subtle sympathy of this way of putting it found grateful harborage in Elizabeth's hungry soul. For a moment she felt comforted. Then came back the thought that, after all, she had found out nothing of the mystery she had come to search out.

"It is very strange," said she, "but, after all, it only adds to the mystery. Why did he do these things? Did you make him do them? And why did he say that he knew Mrs. Hunter, and then deny it? And if he knew about his past when he said he knew her, did he not know it as well afterward? I cannot be blinded to these matters by a statement of things merely mysterious and strange. I must have——"

"My friend," said Mrs. le Claire, "these things will all be explained, trust me. The person tapping at the outer door is Judge Hodggett with Mr. Am—with your future husband. Things will occur of which you should know, and which cannot take place if they know you are here. It will be most honorable for you to stay. Remain here and wait well what happens, and you will get much light on your troubles, and on his—of some of which you do not yet know, which I do not understand, but which will be cleared up. You will say nothing, but watch and listen."

Before Miss Wadston could protest, the other woman was gone. Florian and Judge Hodggett were brought into the middle room, and seated with their faces from the fireplace behind which Elizabeth waited.

wondering what she should do, feeling that she had the right to know, and obedient to the mercenary's commands. Mr. Arden began in modesty, too full of grim determination for any circumlocution.

"Mme. le Claire," said he, "last evening, as I sat at supper, I was notified that this Miss Scarlett had begun salt against me for breach of promise."

"Yes," said Mme. le Claire, "I have heard of it. It is most unjust."

Elizabeth, astounded at Arden's statement, heard her new friend's reply as some far-off note of success in doubtful and deadly battle. She sat close, now, and listened.

"Ever since I came to myself," went on Arden, "and through your wonderful power found out about this life of mine here in Bellevue, the name of Miss Scarlett has come up from time to time as connected with it. I have always shrunk from having you find out just what our relations have been, and the whole thing has been dark to me—dark and forbidding. What wrong I—this man Brasfield—may have done her, I cannot know without your aid. I must know this, now. If she has been wronged, she shall have reparation, as full as I can give."

"What do you mean," said Mme. le Claire—and Elizabeth held her breath—"by full reparation?"

"First let us know the wrong! If that exists, the reparation will be for Miss Scarlett and her advisers to name."

"But they may name the keeping of the promise they say you have made!"

"I have thought that all over."

"But your engagement to—"

"The lady you are about to mention," said Arden, "must have ceased to care much for me, after what I am told took place the other night, and when she learns of this other disgrace, to be most before she sees me again—if ever she does—it will be all over—forever—except the wrong to her—for which reparation can never be made. I—"

"Oh, it is too dreadful!" cried Mme. le Claire. "And for that worst thing—the other night—I only am to blame! I put into you the character in which you have become weak and drawn aside her suggestion, not natural to your own character. Can you ever forgive me?"

"I have never thought of blaming you!" he protested. "You? Why, no one ever

had so good a friend, all the chance I have had to win happiness here, you gave me. I have lost that—by misfortune. Now help me to make things as near right as I can. Put me back into the world of Brasfield, and let me know the worst that I—he—has done."

"Coom een!" said the voice of the professor in the corridor. "Coom een, Clara is not here now: den she must be somewhere. Pe blessed to sit vile I look. Anyhow, she vill soon return. Ach, Herr Cox, we missed you greatly at our supper—sittings of reasons and streams of souls! Ach! Here is our friend to chutche, and Herr Arden—Brasfield, I mean!"

Mme. le Claire appeared in the archway.

"Ah, Miss Scarlett," said she, "you are early. May I ask you to return, in—"

"No!" It was the voice of Miss Scarlett which replied. "No, I'm not going! And if Gene Brasfield is in there, Billy Cox has something to say to him. Billy, do your duty!"

"Pardon me," said Mr. Cox, advancing into the next room, followed by Miss Scarlett. "Pardon me, Judge Hodggett, I have a few words for you and your client. Miss Scarlett has made me agree to apologize to Mr. Brasfield about that summons; and if Gene Brasfield thinks I owe him any apology for putting it onto him a little before his out-of-town friends, I'll make it. But here are the facts, and he knows it. For four years he's been confabing me at every chance with his practical jokes. He had me arrested and detained for a whole day on fake telegrams at Wilkesbarre, only last fall, and just before that he got everybody at the Springs to thinking I was Tucson, and induced a rural constable to take me into custody. Why, Alvord in his worst estate hasn't been as bad as he's been. If he's lost any opportunity, I don't remember it; and, of course, I've got back once in a while, and may be about even. But everything has been good-natured and brotherly, as ought to be between members of the gang. And, of course, when the cannon-crackers began to go off last night, I knew he was doing it. I was over in Major Pumphrey's parlor, where Daisy had invited me during the eruption, and I told her about these things, and wished for some way of getting even, and—and some one spoke of this lather-of promise salt, and we—that is, I—



"I AM TALKING WITH WALL-
BROWN HERE," SAID SHE

Scene by Grace Landon

got up the summons, and I told Ed Truitt to serve it on you at your orgy—you had no business to expect me to enter any free-for-all instructor's competition—you know that, 'Gene! It may have been a little extreme as a joke; but if you'd laughed it off as you always do, nobody would have thought anything of it except to chaff you about it. But what do you do? You make an serious a thing of it as if you hadn't been trotting with our crowd for five years or so. You set this old—my learned friend from the West—brisking it up, and you make a fool of me. Worse than that, you place Daisy in a most objectionable position; and, by George, 'Gene, I claim the apology is due from you, to me and Daisy!"

That is, Florian Arndson, had ever been guilty of playing such pranks as the ones described by Mr. Cox, seemed incredible; but his sense of relief at the way his hand-rolled away in the light of Cox's indignant apology concurred all other sensations. He sprang forward to offer his hand to Mr. Cox.

"I agree with you!" said he. "I do owe you an apology, and I freely offer it. As for the offense I have given Miss Scarlett, I can only say that I have had a very strange mental experience lately, of which my friends here can tell you, or I should never

have—never have taken the matter—no I did. I beg you both to forgive me!"

"'Gene," said Miss Scarlett, offering her hand, "I'm too game a sport to go murmuring because I lost out, and you ought to have known—I declare, I believe you've been crazy! I told Billy—Billy and I are engaged, now, and are really going to be married—I told Billy how when we were at the watering-place, I insisted that it seemed a shame not to be engaged, and how we fixed it to be engaged for a week, and it makes him furious! But so good a fellow as I've been, the way you took our joke was shabby. You people may know some good excuse, but—"

Miss de Claipe was not only a diplomat, she was a strategist. Now, she saw, was the supreme moment in which to complete for Florian the good work she had begun.

"Please excuse Mr. Brassfield," said she. "He is wanted in the back parlor; come, Mr. Brassfield, give me your arm!"

Through the portfolio she swept, bearing Arndson as on wings. There sat Elisabeth, her face bowed down upon her arms, on the back of a sofa. She rose as they entered.

"Elisabeth!" cried Florian. "My darling!"

He stretched out his hands pleadingly,

and walked toward her. She shrunk back, and Miss. de Claire retreated, knowing that the struggle of Amidon's life was before him.

Yet, gentle reader, why should not Amidon win? To us, a thousand things might seem to need explanation; but to Elizabeth, all this separation of Amidon from Brausfield was so new, so little realized, that her love bridged the chasm, and nothing was required except the clearing up of a week or two of curious happenings, most of which had already been so glossed over by Miss. de Claire's generous pen, that what girl in love would require any greater price in hushlike words than Florian yearned to pay? Why, momentum alone covers all sorts of odd and suspicious doings. The case, for instance, of—that that is beside the point. The point is, that with half of Brausfield's skill, Amidon will win handsomely.

"You must let me tell you," cried the occultist to those who were listening for the explanation of Florian's behavior. "Stop, papa! You are spoiling the story!"

Then she told them of Amidon's life in his old home as she had learned of it, of the strange asceticism of his personality, of his recovery, of his bewildered application to her in New York, and how he had been helped. She was a long time telling it, and all the while she was thinking of the tender things happening in the next room. She hated the murmuring of their voices, as full of meaning as the flutings of mating birds. And she faltered and stopped.

"Papa, papa!" she cried, "help me out! Tell them the rest!"

"You will wonder, perhaps," said the professor, "at certain opportunities of conduct of our friends, in his later Prusselish phase, in which he has shown de levallity of apertures—or apertif—*est* in de rest?"

"Sportiveness," said Miss. Scarlett, "is the word."

"Thanks!" said the professor. "Vell, de explanation is dass de Prusselish state vad von of goettismus self-ly professor. It is abnormal. Its chief characteristic is vachervickly. Now, if we find dat to suspect has been driven into te secrets of people of—*vat* you gell?—sporty tendencies, he vould gradually yield to te suggestion of dese tendencies. He vould——"

Elizabeth and Florian stood in the archway, unseen by those present.

"I am glad I heard that," said Elizabeth. "We must not allow you to return to this abnormal state!"

"Mr. Cox," said Judge Hodgson, "do we need a decision to run this agency hell-gate down?—or shall we look among the Christian Ministers?"

"It will relieve me," said Miss. Scarlett, hugging Mr. Cox's arm, "if you won't look. I'm afraid to be searched!"

Elizabeth and Florian emerged from their retreat, appalled for the moment. Her eyes were shining with a soft radiance, his sought her face every moment. What had occurred was very clear. "I am taking Miss. Widdowson home," said he. "I hope to see you all again, soon."

Their farewell to him told how much of a stranger to them he had become in an hour. The mutuality of memories was destroyed, and with it the friendships. It was Florian Amidon, not Eugene Brausfield, from whom they parted.

Once more, into the house with the white columns went Florian, this time buoyant with hope, vibrant with the pulsations of a passionate and prosperous love. Now it was not of the plans for the house that they talked, except to agree that they would not build it. But they spoke of far-off seas, and historic rivers and cities, and they two, all in all to each other.

"Florian!" said she, repeating the strange name. "I like the name; but think how hard it was to learn to call you Eugene! Do you remember when I first called you that?"

"My darling!" he answered, "do you not realize that I know nothing of all that, and except for your dear letter, I know nothing of you before that day I came back from New York?"

"O—hi!" she cried; "and all the sweet things you said and did to win me— Oh, my dear, I never thought of that. And you remember nothing? Oh, it is dreadful, dreadful!"

He put his arm about her, and kissed her lingeringly.

"Dearest, dearest," he said, "the loss is all mine! And to make it up to you, you must let me say them and do them all over again; every one, a thousand times!"